

**Women Empowerment in Indian Apparel Industry through CSR Activities: An
Impact Analysis**

By

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An Impact Analysis**

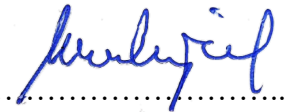
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis with immense gratitude and love to those who have been my pillars of strength throughout this journey.

To my life partner, Mrs. Aparna Bhuvanesh Pawar, whose unwavering love, support, and encouragement have been my greatest source of strength. Your belief in me has been a constant anchor, providing stability and inspiration during the highs and lows of my PhD journey.

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ABSTRACT

Women's economic empowerment, particularly within India's apparel sector, remains a vital subject of inquiry, given the industry's large female workforce and its potential to contribute to gender equality. While employment in the apparel sector offers women avenues for financial independence and social mobility, the sector also presents structural challenges including gender discrimination, unequal pay, and limited leadership roles. Although Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives have been increasingly implemented to promote women's empowerment, there remains a notable research gap in evaluating the effectiveness, sustainability, and inclusivity of these efforts. The aim of this study is to analyze the impact of CSR initiatives on women's empowerment in the Indian apparel industry. Using a quantitative research design, primary data were collected through survey questionnaires from 300 participants, supported by secondary data from company reports and policy documents. The results highlight that while many firms undertake CSR initiatives aimed at health, skill development, and workplace safety for women, a disconnect often exists between policy and implementation. The study proposes a framework for measuring CSR effectiveness based on educational access, leadership development, equal pay, and workplace inclusivity. These findings have significant implications for CSR policymakers, apparel sector leaders, and gender advocacy groups aiming to align business objectives with sustainable development goals. The originality of this research lies in its comprehensive evaluation of CSR's role in bridging gender gaps and promoting sustainable, inclusive growth within India's largest industrial employer of women.

Keywords - Women's Empowerment, Apparel Industry, Corporate Social Responsibility, Gender Equality, India, Workplace Inclusivity, Economic Empowerment, Gender Discrimination, CSR Impact Framework, Female Workforce

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Women's economic empowerment is the capacity of women to choose whether to work, how much to labor, and how to spend or save their wages. In the apparel sector, employment helps provide opportunities for supporting women's empowerment, and on the other side, it also poses risks that can restrict women's empowerment (Bsr, 2017). On the other hand, empowerment can be defined as a situation in which the powerless gain greater control over resources and ideologies. It is also linked with terms including power, agency, status, and autonomy. In the Indian constitution, equal power has been given to women, and authorities have been directed to formulate regulations and rules for safeguarding their rights. In the 1990s, women's empowerment was considered an important phase worldwide that provided opportunities (Singh, 2023).

Furthermore, women's empowerment is not only important but also becoming an imperative aspect. Over the last three decades, different women's organizations, liberal governments, and NGOs have been looking to empower women. The state of women across the length and width of Indian states is depressing, discriminating, and repressive, regardless of the gender of the political leader in authority. It has been shown that there are various forms of empowerment, including psychological, social, educational, political, and economic empowerment (Mandal, 2013). Over the last few decades, drastic changes have occurred in the textile industry. It is observed that forty years ago, most of the production of garments was found in the global North and most of the production was further moved to the region of South. Since the 1980s there has

been an increase in the production of garments and becoming one of the most important garment producers in the world. With more than 45 million workers, the textile sector in India, which is mostly focused on clothing production, employs more people than any other industry in the nation. The sector is estimated to be worth USD 1250 billion, or 2% of India's GDP. India's textile exports expanded significantly during the 1990s: in 1995, the country's textile exports were valued at USD 8 billion; in 2009, they reached USD 20.5 billion; and in 2017, the value of the textile exports reached USD 36 billion, accounting for 15% of all exports from the nation (Hellström, 2020).

It is found that female employees in the garment business obtain the bulk of the human resources. The main reason behind female workers in the textile industry is that female workers mainly possess the required skill sets for this job compared with male employees. Therefore, compared to other industrial sectors, this one has greater potential to support women's empowerment. There are also some limitations associated with the apparel industry so they are not much concentrated on the issues of women empowerment. Thus, the apparel industry has to be focused on the sources through which it can emphasize empowering female employees. On the other side, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is considered an integral part of the apparel sector. It is observed that efficient use of CSR activities can make the apparel industry capable of working for women's empowerment and strengthening the capabilities of female employees (McCarthy, 2017).

1.2 Statement of the problem

The Indian garment sector is considered as the main source of employment and earning income and along with this it also helps in achieving economic development

in the nation. The industry is also facing difficulties concerning gender inequality and the need for women's empowerment in the workforce. It is identified that CSR emerges as a potential aspect for achieving positive change. The present research aims to analyze the impact analysis of CSR initiatives based on women's empowerment in the apparel sector in India. The apparel segment in India faced a noticeable gap between genders with women to whom low wages are provided and the positions of women are also less influential. It is observed that the gap between genders affected the career growth of women and also influenced the progress of the industry by limiting the aspects and ideas of diversity. In the apparel sector, women frequently face issues related to limited access to education and the development of skills. Women also faced challenges associated with unequal pay which affected their advancement in professional life. CSR is also considered as an important tool for empowering women and providing solutions to the problem. Understanding how CSR initiatives affect the empowerment of women is important for designing interventions and addressing the challenges faced by female workers. The study helps to provide knowledge related to CSR initiatives in the apparel industry which further helps in contributing to increasing the status of women workers. The study contributed to providing knowledge of the influence of CSR on the dynamics of gender and developing inclusivity in women in the apparel industry.

1.3 Significance of the study

The importance of the study on empowering women in the apparel sector in India involves CSR activities for bringing transformation in the organization. It is determined that the apparel industry is considered a major contributor to the economy of the nation. On the other side, the workforce also faced issues associated with

gender inequality, discrimination in the workplace, and limited access to education. It is observed that determining the influence of CSR activities on empowering women is important. The apparel sector served a broader aspect concerning the CSR activities undertaken by companies to provide better services to customers in the marketplace. CSR initiatives help contribute to dealing with issues and problems that the apparel sector faces while operating businesses in the market. Empowering women in the country is also related to the economic development of the country. The study helps provide insight into CSR initiatives taken by Indian companies for creating sustainability and emphasizing social responsibility towards the environment. The study highlights CSR initiatives which further range from the development of skill programs to promoting a safe working environment for women in the Indian apparel sector. It is evaluated that empowered women likely contribute to achieving economic growth as this not only increases their income but also creates positive financial stability among families. Carrying out impact analysis helps in determining CSR models and practices concerning the apparel industry. The research also helps encourage companies to adopt initiatives that help in empowering women in the country.

1.4 Research Objectives

The primary aim of the study is to study women's empowerment in the Indian apparel industry and how CSR activities can contribute to it. Based on this aim, the study will have the following objectives.

- To analyze the current status of women's employment, representation, and empowerment in the industry

- To examine the nature and extent of CSR initiatives aimed at women's empowerment
- To develop a framework for measuring the impact of CSR activities on women's empowerment
- To evaluate the effectiveness of existing CSR policies and regulations in promoting women's empowerment in the apparel industry.

1.5 Research questions

The study will have the following research questions.

- What is the status of women's employment, representation, and empowerment in the industry?
- What is the nature and extent of CSR initiatives aimed at women's empowerment?
- What framework will be effective for measuring the impact of CSR activities on women's empowerment?
- What is the effectiveness of existing CSR policies and regulations in promoting women's empowerment in the apparel industry?

1.6 Hypothesis

- H1: Different regions have similar employment, representation, and empowerment rates for women.

H1: There are regional differences as well; some areas have made more progress toward equality for women in industry than others.
- H2: There is no significant difference in the nature and extent of CSR initiatives aimed at women's empowerment across industries

H2: There is a significant difference in the nature and extent of CSR initiatives aimed at women's empowerment across industries

- H3: There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of various impact measurement frameworks for assessing the impact of CSR activities on women's empowerment

H3: There is a significant difference in the effectiveness of various impact measurement frameworks for assessing the impact of CSR activities on women's empowerment

- H4: There is no significant difference in outcomes of women's empowerment between companies in the apparel sector executed CSR policies and regulations

H4: Companies in the apparel sector that implemented CSR policies have significant improvements in women's empowerment compared with companies not implemented CSR policies

1.7 Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

The present research is limited to gathering information and data in the context of the apparel industry only with specific reference to India. This limits the sources of collecting information and analyzing women's empowerment concerning the Indian context only. The adoption of CSR initiatives also differs from company to company due to the availability of resources, mainly the financial resources for running CSR activities. The study is also limited to analyzing the effectiveness of CSR activities by indulging women's empowerment in the apparel sector. The regional and cultural diversity in India also affects the importance of CSR strategies in the apparel segment.

On the other side, delimitation is that the Indian apparel sector is limited in the scope of companies operating in the sector. Other sectors focus on contributing empowerment of women through CSR initiatives and the present research helps in providing knowledge of issues and opportunities in the apparel sector.

1.8 Definition of terms

Women empowerment: - Women's empowerment is the process of advancing women's sense of self-worth, their autonomy, and their right to influence social change for both themselves and other people (Worldvision, 2023).

CSR activities: - According to the theory of corporate social responsibility, or CSR, companies should give back to the community and consider the social and environmental effects of their activities (Bdc, 2023).

1.9 Background of the study

The primary goal of women's empowerment is to raise their standing in the home, community, and society. It promotes women's access to contemporary development resources and increases their involvement in social, political, and economic spheres. In India, women's empowerment is important. It is evaluated that after the independence the Indian Constitution in the year 1950 officially granted men and women suffrage. When universal suffrage was implemented in 1950, all women were able to vote. The Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha are the two houses of India's parliamentary system. Women's participation in Lok Sabha elections increased to 46.63% in 1962 and 58.60% in 1984. The central government of India exercises delegated powers. In this case, state assemblies and the national parliament are chosen by popular vote. Only 10.9% of women were elected to the national parliament in

2012, which is comparatively higher than the 8.8% in Hungary, the 9.1% in China, and the 9.8% in Malaysia (Das, 2021).

In addition, more women are entering the workforce and holding prominent positions in a variety of industries, including politics, business, and entertainment. Despite achievements in India, women also face challenges related to gender discrimination, violence against women, and unequal pay considered major issues. In rural areas, female infanticide and feticide are considered as having significant concerns.

Similarly, the security and safety of women are also regarded as significant issues involving certain incidents associated with sexual harassment which are reported every year. It is identified that in India women granted different legal rights over the years for the promotion of gender equality and the protection of their interests (Lawpedia, 2023). Furthermore, substantial progress has been made in reducing gender disparities within the nation. Based on the information provided by the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report Index 2022 the score of India was one for the sub-categories of primary and tertiary education enrolment under the vertical Educational Attainment. This helps in converging between genders in primary and tertiary education enrolment. There are also some programs organized by the government such as (Sarva Sikhsha Abhiyaan 2001), (Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign 2015), and scholarship schemes for girls' children to capture the public imagination at certain levels (Bhagat and Goli, 2023).

It is determined that women's empowerment has a long history in India. Social reformers mainly worked in the past such as Swami Vivekananda, Acharya Vinobha Bhave, and Raja Ram Mohan abolished practices such as child marriage and sati for the upliftment of women in the country. In 1917, the Indian National Congress was

one of the first political parties in India to raise its voice to demand political rights for women. Policy related to women's empowerment was incorporated into the constitution of India and further became effective in the year 1950. It is observed that Article 15 helps in reducing gender discrimination and Article 15(2) helps in empowering the state to take affirmative steps in favor of women. Further, activists like Sunitha Krishnan working towards rescuing and protecting women and girls who were raped, and social entrepreneurs such as Arunachalam Muruganantha, invented sanitary pads for women of low cost so that women from rural areas can afford to buy them (Femaleonezero, 2023).

On the other hand, women's empowerment is becoming an imperative need for society as it helps in developing inclusivity, progress, and equality. It is observed that India will add USD 770 billion to GDP by the year 2025 by providing equal opportunities to women in the country. Women from underprivileged communities also faced barriers and discrimination. The country must address these issues and create equitability. It is evaluated that CSR allows working with unprivileged people and developing societies to create an impact. CSR is becoming an important aspect of creating impacts on the corporate landscape which goes beyond making profits and includes contributing positively to society by empowering women. With the help of CSR activities, companies help create an equitable society in which equal opportunities are provided to women, access to resources, and promoting gender equality along with supporting economic and social advancement. It also contributes to organizing programs related to education and literacy, health and sanitation, financial inclusion, and community engagement (Carmandate, 2023).

It is determined that empowering women and encouraging the spirit of entrepreneurs is an important aspect of CSR for businesses such as Vedanta, Hindalco, Jindals, Tatas, and many more. Interventions were carried out by covering the surrounding areas of the operational regions. In Jindal, the CSR activities were linked with Jajpur, Hisar, Gurgaon and Visakhapatnam. It is determined that companies like Tata Steel supported the formation of more than 500 rural entrepreneurs in different segments such as livestock, poultry, community, and agriculture. It worked to empower 200 women every year to encourage them to generate income through these activities (Sugyanee, 2022).

1.9.1 Role of Women in the Apparel Industry

In the world, the textile industry is one of the oldest industries. For centuries, women played a crucial role in shaping the sector. They provided their contribution in different ways from spinning to weaving, marketing, designing, and many more. Currently, the influence of women is evident involving management and leadership skills in creative designs and developing original concepts. Previously, women were responsible for weaving and spinning yarn fabric. This includes the use of machinery and manual tools in challenging conditions at work while putting in long hours in factories. During those difficult times minimum wages, their talents and knowledge were important for textile industry development. Most women sustain themselves and their families at the time of their work. In the year 1910, International Women's Day came into existence in Copenhagen at the time of the 2nd International Conference of Socialist Women which brought hundred women from 17 countries. In 1911, the first International Women's Day was celebrated which demanded women's right to vote, right to work, and to reduce discrimination in the workplace (Smartex, 2023).

Furthermore, women continued to play an important role in the development of the textile industry. They worked in mills and factories for the production of textiles on a higher scale in the 19th and 20th centuries. While they faced discrimination and received poor wages, many women advanced their ranks by becoming supervisors and managers dealing with barriers and paving the way for future generations. It has been reported by the International Labour Organization (ILO) that women comprise 60-90% of the global workforce in the textile and garment industry and women represent 55% in the textile sector. Women have been at the forefront of developing innovative patterns, designs, and novel textiles and materials for millennia. Women have also been strong champions for change, pushing for equitable pay and better working conditions for workers worldwide (Smartex, 2023).

It is estimated that since the 1960s in developing countries, women have dominated the highly labor-intensive lines of supply chains internationally. Due to their unequal status in most countries, women are less expensive laborers because, in most households, their employment serves as a secondary or supplemental source of income. According to research, women are chosen for these kinds of positions because they are more accustomed to working in monotonous, repetitive, and boring tasks, are less likely to join trade unions, and are more prepared to accept rigorous work rules—all of which increase productivity. Despite this, very few Indian working women advance in their jobs due to a variety of factors, including a lack of professional networks, social norms that constrain them, and family obligations (Fotedar and Nirupama, 2023).

It is determined that in garment factories across Asia, there is a majority of women workers becoming leaders at work in their communities. Women make up about 75%

of the worldwide garment workforce, although they are frequently underrepresented in leadership roles within their communities and places of employment. This depicted the issues faced by women workers who are unrecognized or not prioritized with the power to make a difference. On the other hand, situations might change when women have the skills and confidence to speak up and they can speak together involving a unified voice. The research was carried out in Bangladesh which showed support for women in developing leadership skills and taking collective actions to help women at the time of maternity, dealing with harassment in the workplace, and receiving minimum wages. Care organizations adopted the Ekata model which helps provide support to women in identifying challenges together and taking action. The organization emphasizes providing a training curriculum and engaging management in increasing the number of women's garments in leadership roles and dealing with barriers that women face to achieve equality in the workplace (Care, 2023).

One of the few sectors that has historically relied on female artisans is the garment business, which still creates opportunities for women's empowerment today, particularly in underdeveloped nations. It is identified that Bangladesh is considered a major player in the worldwide readymade clothing market which employs around 3.6 million people of which 50% are women. There has been an increase in participation of female labor in Bangladesh which grew from 24.73% in 1990 and further increased by 36.26% in the year 2019. This constitutes having a significant percentage of women employed in the garment sector accounting for 80% of the nation's earnings with the help of exports. The garment industry in India provides employment to around 15 million people with 90% of workers being females. It is observed that

women are found at different levels of organization from skilled workers to managers to executives (Fashinza, 2023).

It has been identified that gender-responsive procurement (GRP) is considered one of the approaches that have been proposed for the promotion of gender equality and empowering female employees. This helps in ensuring equal and fair treatment of women as companies can create safe and decent working conditions and provide training and development opportunities for workers in the supply chain. This helps in addressing issues which are faced by female workers such as long hours of work, harassment, lack of job security, and low wages. It helps in providing safe and decent working conditions to employees. It is observed that companies can conduct regular audits of suppliers as factors identifying and addressing health and safety issues by ensuring workers are not exposed to dangerous chemicals or fumes. This also supported paying fair wages as GDP helps women workers pay fair wages that are commensurate with skills and experience. It also supported offering training and development opportunities for women workers which helps them acquire new skills and advance their careers (Shesupplies, 2023).

Monika Sharma is one of the women leaders in the consumer and retail segment and business director at SGS. She believed that transparency and self-authenticity were considered an important mantra for success. In addition to this, it stated that hard work and perseverance are the aspects of winning. It is also essential to enhance skills and develop accountability for achieving ecosystem success in the organization (Apparelresource, 2020). It is observed that she adopted the transformational leadership style which helps in contributing towards bringing positive changes in the industry. To achieve this mission, she implemented openness, respect, and

collaboration along with increasing her ability to handle criticism within the organization. Another example is Anita Chester who is head of sustainable raw materials at C&A Foundation whose main target is to make fashion precious and respectable for consumers as well as workers. The main aim of Anita is to bring transformation by emphasizing initiatives that help in making the fashion sector sustainable (Apparelresource, 2020).

1.9.2 Emergence of Corporate Social Responsibility

The term "corporate social responsibility" (CSR) refers to the collection of procedures, guidelines, and tactics that businesses use to simultaneously fulfill the interests of many stakeholders and have a positive social and environmental impact. Over the past few decades, the interest of stakeholders has grown and become complex by considering globalized phenomena and relationships which pushed the integration and development of socially responsible practices within the businesses in different local and global industries (Mosca and Civera, 2017). It is determined that the execution of socially responsible practices was found in the 1800s with the Industrial Revolution. Welfare policies were executed by companies for internal stakeholders. It is identified that CSR is considered a set of compulsory rules that both company and managers owners must respect for pursuing policies, making decisions, or involving strategic actions that are consistent with values and expectations. The 1960s was considered a period of evolution of CSR. Businesses were believed to be major players in social and environmental conflicts, as evidenced by the definitions of corporate social responsibility during this decade (Mosca and Civera, 2017). CSR is considered as long and vast and necessary for pointing out helps in providing CSR along with significant papers with regards to the evolution of social expectations

of corporate behavior. It is evaluated that there is a link between social expectations of corporate behavior and how CSR is understood and executed, opening room for future research (Latapí Agudelo et al., 2019). CSR can be defined as self-regulation by businesses to ensure social responsibility. This definition involves the reduction in carbon footprints and improving working conditions. The adoption of CSR is relatively recent involving the concept from around the century. The concept of CSR has been around for a long time and has changed dramatically since its inception is extremely narrow and helps in narrowing down to involve more issues and affecting a wider range of business decisions. This transformation began in the 1960s when scholars began approaching CSR as a response to emerging problems for modern society and businesses started executing these practices. It is determined that businesses are missing out if they are not participating in CSR activities (Schoff, 2023).

It is determined that in the last few decades, companies have been working towards the adoption of CSR to provide sustainability in society. This concept took shape in the 1950s and the practice of CSR gained popularity in recent times. Howard Bowen, an American economist introduced the concept of CSR in his publication *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman*. Bowen is also treated as the father of CSR. It is treated as a philanthropic exercise and nothing has been done with the business. It was considered as an institution for building exercises such as research and educational institutes. Thinking of corporate businesses changed as they started adopting CSR as a philanthropic aspect which is associated with responsibility and veering towards the development of the community with the help of different projects. It is identified that corporations are moving toward spending in different areas including controlling

pollution, the safety of roads, and the development of slums. In 2014, India became the first country to mandate corporate social responsibility legally. This concept is accepted by stakeholders and society in India (Lawbhoomi, 2022).

Furthermore, in the year 2013 companies for the first time mandated that private corporations focus on joining public sector firms for offering annual donations for CSR. It is determined that all firms with net worth above Rs 500 crore and turnover over RS 1,000 crore come under section 135 for spending at least 2% annual profits and developing a CSR committee for looking towards the spending of the firm (Deo, 2020). Before 2013 in India CSR work from 1850 to 1914 CSR was done through dynastic charities, from 1914 to 1947 they emphasized supporting the freedom struggle, 1947 to 1960 CSR was carried out by supporting new states or launching their rural initiatives, and from 1960 to 1990 with the help of corporate trusts, 1991 to 2013 it was carried out as family trusts, private-public partnerships and sponsoring NGOs and from 2013 to present there is a mandatory rule of investing 2% for CSR activities. It is observed that in India tradition of seva, daan, and zakat was operated for centuries to support and shape the relationship between the dispossessed and the privileged (Deo, 2020)

In addition to this, CSR activities in modern India are associated with the pre-independence era in which the concept is associated with charities carried out in the form of the construction of healthcare and educational institutions by businessmen including Birlas and Tatas (Scoreindia, 2018). After independence, there was the emergence of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs). These help play an important role in the development of the agenda. On the other hand, the economic liberalization of the Indian economy in the 1990s had major shifts like CSR activities. It is determined

that with the economic growth of countries, companies were able to contribute towards CSR activities. The charity was also considered a responsibility. In the present market scenario, Indian companies contributed to social development in the areas of skill development, healthcare, education, and rural development. Therefore, in India CSR is not just considered as charity but responsibility (Scoreindia, 2018). On the other hand, the government also plays an important role in the promotion of CSR. It is evaluated that the government's interest in the promotion of CSR is enhanced because of business objectives that cannot be achieved without the involvement of the government either legally or voluntarily. It is identified that the government has a stake in making sure achieving CSR objectives. It is evaluated that in the UK CSR is promoted due to social governance deficits which further reflect the vulnerabilities of the marketplace and satellite along with the ongoing demands of society for contributing towards CSR. In the UK, a government-appointed minister for CSR as they have seen the importance of CSR in the country. It is treated as good working practice for the company to engage local communities and understand the brand name which depends not only on price, quality, and uniqueness. In addition to this, companies also interact with the community, environment, and workforce for the development of CSR (Wirba, 2023).

Apart from this, the government involved different methods that help in fostering CSR practices among private businesses. The government supports raising awareness and building capacities for CSR among companies and stakeholders. It is determined that people are aware of social issues faced by businesses and also gained attention which helped in focusing on developing solutions for dealing with these issues (Givingforce, 2023). The government helps in providing crucial information to the

private sector with the help of initiatives carried out including websites informing companies of CSR and the role of society and business. Companies refer to online resources for gaining knowledge associated with issues and solving them. The government is also involved in setting a standard with the help of developing the provision of policy frameworks that further encourage companies to enhance performance. CSR is promoted among industries by the government at the national level which further helps to encourage standards across the board (Giving force, 2023).

The government also focuses on six areas for the promotion of CSR activities among private-sector businesses. It is associated with increasing knowledge related to the positive influence of CSR on society as well as businesses. It involves the development of the exchange of good practice and experience in achieving corporate responsibility. In addition to this, it also supported the promotion of the development of corporate responsibility management skills. This also helps in facilitating transparency and convergence of CSR and tools (Bhave, 2009). This also supported the launching of a multi-stakeholder forum based on corporate responsibility at the EU level. Additionally, it helps in integrating corporate responsibility into community policies. It is observed that four different roles of government are comprehensible in different CSR themes. The CSR themes are associated with the role of business in public policy, minimum standards, corporate governance, the development of community, responsible investment, and management systems (Bhave, 2009).

Based on the Companies Act 2013 different CSR activities have been carried out in the country which contribute to reducing hunger, malnutrition, and poverty. Here, businesses promoted sanitation and healthcare aspects in rural areas. This can also be

done through contributing to Swach Bharat Kosh which has been set up by the central government. In addition to this, education is promoted to increase employment and offer special education to women, the differently-abled, and the elderly. CSR activities are also carried out associated with the environment which support protecting flora and fauna, animal welfare, and conserving natural resources. Similarly, some companies in India also carry out CSR practices such as Tata Power helps empower women through Self-help groups in the region of Kutch, Gujarat. This helps provide financial aid and loans for purchasing cattle, and capital for business and medical purposes (Chandra, 2022).

1.9.3 Current Status of Women's Empowerment In India

It is identified that women have been considered an integral part of culture and society in India since ancient times. In recent times, there has been positive development achieved in India for empowering women. The government executed different programs and policies that aim to enhance the health of women, providing economic opportunities and education. There has been a significant increase in women's participation in the workforce and women also achieved higher positions in different fields such as business, entertainment, and politics. On the other side, women in India also faced issues related to violence, unequal pay, and discrimination. Over the past few years, women in India have also been granted different legal rights over years for the promotion of equality and protecting interests (Times of India, 2023).

Moreover, according to the census 2011 population of women was 48.5% of the total population in India. The increasing relevance and significance of women's empowerment in the evolving dynamics of society. The Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi also spoke regarding the empowerment of women on the 82nd

edition of Mann Ki Baat. It is determined that education plays a crucial role in developing self-confidence among women and enabling changing status in society. It is identified that skilling and micro-finance help women become financially stable and no longer depend on others in society. It is observed that giving education to women is associated with giving education to the whole family. It is evaluated that the Constitution of India has certain provisions which are mainly linked with women's empowerment and preventing discrimination against women in society (Niti, 2023). It is determined that Article 14 discussed equality before the law. Further, Article 15 is associated with the state to make special provisions for women. The progress of humanity is incomplete without women, so successive governments launched different schemes for women's empowerment in a society that is male-dominated. Additionally, different schemes were launched by the government of India such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Andolan to create awareness among people for educating all girl children in the country. This scheme was promoted successfully with the help of forming a block task force and a district task force. It is observed that publicity made of this program in electronic and print media (Niti, 2023).

The government is continuously working toward women's development to maximize their access to education, training, and skills. MUDRA Yojana (Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency Ltd) was launched to provide loans of up to 10 lakhs to women entrepreneurs without any collateral. It is determined that earlier women left jobs after giving birth to children, so because of this a lot of working women are unemployed. Further, the government passed an amendment related to providing maternity benefits which tends to increase the period of maternity leaves

from 12 weeks to 26 weeks. This has provided a new vision of women's empowerment as propagated by the prime minister of India (Niti, 2023).

For many centuries, women were not provided equal opportunities compared with men in different ways. It is identified that they were not allowed to have property and not have a share in the parent's property along with this they did not have voting rights and freedom of choosing their job. Further steps were taken to empower women in India as the framers of the constitution are consciously related to the problem of women's empowerment which also supported ensuring the gender equality principles in the Indian constitution. Additionally, the Constitution helps in empowering and adopting measures of positive discrimination in favor of women. Further, schemes were launched associated with empowering women such as the Mahila Samridhi Yojana, Self-help groups at Panchayat, and the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh scheme. The Ministry of Women and Child Development was developed as a department of the Ministry of Human Resource Development in the year 1985 to drive the holistic development of children and women in the country (Das, 2021).

It is evaluated that the National Commission for Women is treated as a Department within the Ministry of Child and Women Development. It was mainly set up to help women through the Constitution by reviewing legal and constitutional safeguards for women, facilitating quick redressal of grievances, and suggesting legislative measures. This also helps in the online submission of complaints and redressal exclusively for women. It is treated as a good information resource for women and the commission is linked with helping out women in their time of need (Das, 2021).

Empowerment of women is considered an important aspect in the society or country. It is evaluated that women are an important section of society. Education as a means

of empowerment of women helps in bringing positive attitudinal change. The Indian constitution helps empower states to adopt affirmative measures for prompting ways and means for empowering women. Education is considered a milestone in empowering women as it enables them to respond to challenges by confronting their traditional roles and changing their lives (Bhat, 2015). Women's Education in India is supposed to be an upcoming superpower of the world in recent years. Changing women's education helps in recognizing the central issue in evaluating women's status in the country.

Furthermore, according to the census 2011, the literacy rate in India is 74 percent and the rate of literacy among women is 65.46%. The female literacy percentage in the country was 54.16 percent in the year 2001. There has been an increase in the literacy rate in the country from 18.33% in 1951 to 74% as per the 2011 census. The female literacy rate increased from 8.86 percent in 1951 to 65.46 percent in 2011. During the period 1991-2001, female literacy rate rose by 11.72%. The female literacy rate was 3.15 compared with the male literacy rate. There are also certain factors responsible for poor literacy rates including girl child occupation in domestic chores, gender-based inequality, low enrolment of girls in schools, low retention rate, and social discrimination (Loksabhadocs, 2018).

After the country gained independence in 1947 the government took different measures for providing education to women in India. Over the last three decades, there has been growth in female literacy. In 1971, only 22% of women were literate, and by the end of 2011, 65.64% of females were literate. The Indian constitution guarantees the right to equality to all Indian women without any discrimination. Before independence, the literacy rate was 2.6% and has now risen to 65.46%. For the

development of the education of women in India, the national government introduced different committees including the (Radhakrishnan Commission or University Education Commission 1948), (Smt. Hansa Mehta Committee 1962) and M. Bhaktvatsalam Committee for looking into the cause of public support mainly in the rural areas for girl's education and public corporation (Journalijcar, 2021).

On the other hand, women in India also faced certain issues such as dowry and bride burning, disparity in education, sexual harassment, female infanticide, child marriages, inadequate nutrition, low status in the family, domestic violence, and status of widows. In addition to this, some modern issues that women also faced in the modern era related to gender discrimination as women are considered as weaker sections of society in which women give less importance. It is identified that girl children are considered as real victims of discrimination. Similarly, discrimination is also done based on work and power between women and men in India. Additionally, women are also affected by violence every day which disrupts society. Women are victims of violence at a huge level day by day with increasing crimes against women. They faced violence within the family linked with harassment, dowry, marital rape, sexual base, and deprivation of healthy food (Ijip, 2017).

It is evaluated that women's empowerment process faces issues including lack of education, financial constraints, the responsibility of the family, low mobility, low ability to bear risk, low need for achievement, and absence of ambition. Women in the country also faced the issues associated with changes in social norms which required transformation in the inequitable gender attitudes, harmful practices, and behaviors. In Indian society, common thinking of extending business by son creates an issue related to gender disparity. There is a general mentality of Indians as the father works, and

the mother does not do anything as she stays at home only. The most difficult task is for the mother as she takes care of everyone in the family and keeps the house clean. Special occasions such as festivals are considered overtime for them. Conversely, the woman gets happy if she is praised with lots of love and respect. Similarly, in the case of their daughter, she did not need to do anything. There is also high time which changes the mindset of parents to treat girls equally to boys, support them openly and let them live their lives on their terms (Tembhre, 2018).

1.9.4 Nature and Extent of CSR Initiatives Directed Towards Women

Empowerment in India

CSR just became popular in developing nations like India in the new millennium, even though commercial organizations, especially those like the TATA, had an early focus on serving society. It is determined that in India there is a wider gap between sections of people concerning income and socio-economic status, which is an ideal CSR that contains both philosophical and ethical dimensions (Abraham, 2013). There are various companies spending money on social causes and achieving betterment in the community in which business operations are conducted. They are continuously working towards enhancing education, health, the condition of children and women, and so on. It is identified that concerning CSR different practices are carried out related to the reduction in child mortality and improving maternal health, promoting gender equality and women empowerment, conducting employment, eradicating hunger and poverty, and conducting employment by increasing vocational skills (Abraham, 2013).

It is evaluated that of the total population of the world, the population of India is one-fifth. But in the country, the lowest percentage is of women which indicates there is a

need for empowering women in the country. In India, different empowerment projects are carried out through CSR based on the allocation of CSR funds by the company. Project Shakti was introduced by Hindustan Unilever Limited to empower women financially and provide them with opportunities related to livelihood in rural India. Under this project, training was given to Shakti entrepreneurs to familiarize themselves with the product. The company has a team of Rural Sales Promoters who coach and help Shakti entrepreneurs in managing their businesses. This program supported women in gaining skills related to sales, improving self-esteem and learning communication skills. In addition to this, Hindustan Zinc Limited is also working towards empowering women with a project named Sakhi which emphasizes helping women by developing their skills in different areas of leadership, entrepreneurship, and development of skills. Under this project, there are 2,248 SHGs, 207 village-level organizations, and 07 federations with a membership of 27,517 women. The implementing partner of this project is the Manjari Foundation (Csrbox, 2021).

Additionally, Godrej Consumer Products Limited also started a project named Salon-i which is considered a vocational training programme for women. It was designed entirely in-house to provide training to young women with basic skills related to beauty, skin, hair care, and Mehndi application. It is determined that life skills and entrepreneurship development modules help enable women to take jobs or pursue self-employment based on their unique sets of skills and circumstances. In this project, young women provided training through beautypreneurs. The implementing partners of this project were Vrutti, YUVA, Dhriti, Saath, and Vision India. Apart from this, CCL Products Indian Limited also carried out initiatives named skill

development and self-employment (Csrbox, 2021). The development of a nation seen as empowering women is in that nation. CCL products tend to empower women and stand with them in difficult situations in life. They work in different areas including girl child education, making them skilled and economically self-sufficient and providing safe shelters.

In the present society, empowering women is treated as an imperative aspect that helps in developing inclusivity, progress, and equality among them. It is determined that CSR becomes a fundamental and impactful part of the landscape of corporations running in the country. Through CSR activities, companies are able to create equality and develop a society in which women are provided equal opportunities and access to resources along with the promotion of gender equality. CSR initiatives help in organizing education and literacy programs by targeting underprivileged women and girls (Csrmandate, 2023). In this, training, scholarships are provided to girl children in the country. It is observed that in underprivileged communities accessing quality education helps break the poverty cycle which tends to educate women by investing in their children's health and education. In addition to this, the Newgen Digital Discovery Pathshala (NDDP) initiative was undertaken to provide a digital literacy program for the mothers of students of the NDDP program. This program helps in accessing technology and creating awareness related to different aspects such as mental and physical health, hygiene and rights of women (Csrmandate, 2023). It is observed that CSR is considered as a means of addressing inequality among people by facilitating in achieving empowerment among women. Women are often and powerfully portrayed as advocates of sustainability and as the rescuers of communities or economies. It is identified that feminist Foucauldian emphasizes

involving the reading of power as relational and productive which helps in explaining the engagement of ongoing process of resistance and self-making. The CSR program is important and along with this helps in making women strong and do their tasks individually. This supported achieving gender equality and along with this focuses on emphasizing achieving equality within the business (McCarthy, 2017).

In India, under the apparel sector, AMHSSC carried out CSR projects in pan India. The features of this project are that AMHSSC involves employing 70% of students associated with the organization after the training. It will also help candidates in applying for different kinds of loans considering different schemes. AMHSSC also carried out an employment portal on the website. In this training, providers provide details of their paused candidates across the country. Different manufacturers of apparel placed their demand on the portal and based on that products have been supplied to them. This portal helps in creating employment in the country. AMHSSC is connected with the apparel industry and the apparel industry manpower is needed which further pass candidates and help them get absorbed into the industry. They also form self-help groups and candidates would become co-owners of those SHGs connecting with the industry. Under this program, the living standards of people were enhanced, and they were provided with livelihood opportunities in the region (Csrbox., 2023).

Furthermore, in the healthcare CSR activities were carried out in the financial year 2020-21. Reliance Industries Limited conducted an initiative named COVID-19 relief activities. The company contributed to CSR towards COVID-19- Mission Covid Suraksha. This project aims to protect people from the coronavirus. It provided 81 lakh masks and safety advisory material to communities. This also supported in

providing more than 5.5 lakh liters of fuel to emergency vehicles in different states for delivering COVID-19 services. The portal was developed by the company named Jio Health Hub which allowed patients to connect with healthcare professionals due to restrictions of social distancing during the pandemic (Csrbox, 2023).

Candila Healthcare Limited also runs a CSR program intending to serve and cater to the needs of patients and offer them the best medical education in the rural interiors in the region of Gujarat. In a similar context, Zydus opened a new medical college and hospital at Dahod. In the building of a hospital. 5 modular OTs are ready and equipped along with instruments used in ICUs and OTs. It also helps in offering residential quarters to the staff of the hospital. The dialysis center also started soon and all the equipment and instruments are procured along with considering the installation work which is underway (Csrbox, 2023).

In addition to this, the Indian government also worked towards the development of skills of people in the country. It is determined that the government has taken several steps to encourage skill development including Skill India which is also known as the National Skills Development Mission of India. Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi introduced this in the year 2015 and aimed at providing training to around 30 crore people in the country in different skills by the year 2022. It is observed that under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) program the government taught 10 million young people. In addition to this, CSR also plays an important role in the development of skills. It is identified that industry investment in worker skill development helps create a compelling business case as it plays a crucial role in achieving economic growth in the nation. The business sector has different tools and also influences the ecosystem of skill development (Smile foundation India, 2023).

Similarly, different organizations in India emphasize the development of skills for which they organize certain programs. It is determined that Tata Chemicals Limited runs a program with the total expenditure on the project of INR 10.24 Cr. The company has through its Non-Farm livelihood program carried out a skill development program for youths and rural women artisans. The company is running a skill development program at various locations to provide training to unemployed youth and facilitate employment or the development of entrepreneurship. In this vocational training, skills have been developed including welder technician, fashion & technology, fitter technician, beauty & wellness, and domestic electrician. In addition to this, the company set up a technical skill training institute at Mithapur which is affiliated with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC). This Okhai program was conducted which helps to promote and develop traditional handicrafts. The main objective behind this program is to create opportunities for livelihood for rural women in the country (Csrbox, 2021).

Additionally, the CSR program is run by the Apparel Training and Design Center (ATDC) in which vocational training has been organized in the Apparel segment for 25 years and have a track record of more than 7 years of successful execution of the projects supported by various government/semi-government and public sector undertakings. Skill Development projects implemented by ATDC in different states under the State Skill Development Mission. In the recent past, training has been provided to more than 10,000 candidates under CSR from different PSUs and by different agencies of government. The main objective of projects under ATDC is to provide employable skills to intermediate or underprivileged youth for dignified

employment as middle-level shop floor managers in the garment sector (Atdcindia, 2023).

It is determined that Skill India Mission is committed to Apparel Made-Ups Home Furnishing Sector Skill Council (AMH SSC) in which Rs 51 lakhs donated from their CSR funds to the National Skill Development Fund (NSDF) for empowering youth of India by providing training to enhance skills. In India, as CSR initiatives, education and the development of skills are emerging aspects in the country. CSR funds are utilized in a planned way, companies cannot only boost the Skill India Mission but also have an influence on Skilling India and millions of livelihoods by creating a robust labor market (Indiacsr, 2023).

In the textile industry, CSR activities have been carried out considering different parties such as employees. It helps in providing a competitive and challenging environment of work to employees, ethical recruitment, promotion, remuneration, and other policies. It also helps in providing opportunities for employees to raise opinions and complaints along with this also supports working in a safe environment for employees. This also helped in formulating fair policies for the solution of employee disputes. Similarly, government responsibility is linked with providing necessary information to the government and making payment of due taxes and duties at the proper time. Abided by regulations and laws of the area in which firms operate. Similarly, customers' responsibility is associated with offering quality products to customers at reasonable prices and undertaking constant research and development to come up with innovative and useful products. Additionally, considering investors there is a responsibility to provide them with due returns on the investment made by them. Concerning suppliers there is a responsibility of making payment to suppliers

for products purchased from them. In addition to this, it also supports maintaining good relationships with suppliers (Fibre2fashion, 2023).

1.9.5 Efficiency of CSR Activities Directed Towards Women Empowerment in India]

It is evaluated that the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) has executed different programs for bringing women into all sectors of the economy and empowering them. Swadhar Greh Scheme was launched to provide women with better support and along with this provide rehabilitation to them so that they could live a better life with dignity. The outcome of this program is that it provides basic needs to women including shelter, food, medical facilities, and clothing, and along with this provides care to women without any economic and social support.

Moreover, the Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK) scheme was launched in 2017 to empower women living in rural areas through participation in the community (Pib, 2022). The main aim behind implementing this scheme is to create an environment in which women feel supported, have potential, provide quality education and health and safety along with offering social security to women. The scheme is executed through State Governments and UT Administrations with a cost-sharing ratio of 60:40 between centers and states except for Northeast and Special Category States in which the funding ratio is 90:10. For the Union Territories 100% funding has been provided through the central government (Pib, 2022).

Working Women Hostel is another scheme that helps to provide safe accommodation and environment for women who are working and along with this offers them daycare facilities for their children. Under this scheme, the government is provided with a new hostel building and extension for rented premises. The beneficiaries of this scheme

are working women, this scheme also provides particular preference for working women who belong to the disadvantaged sections of the society (Godigit, 2023). This also helps in providing reservation seats for physically challenged beneficiaries. This scheme was mainly adopted by the Women and Child Care Development Ministry. The outcome of this scheme is to encourage the presence of convenient places for working for women who are leaving their families for professional commitments. So, to provide better living areas and facilities, the government launched this scheme for women.

Mahila E-haat is also considered an important initiative that was launched by the Ministry of Child and Women Development. This scheme of women empowerment helps provide opportunities for women entrepreneurs to use technology and present their products on the online platform. Through mobile and internet connection, women entrepreneurs provide their products with their features and photographs. This helps attract buyers by showcasing their products on online platforms. This scheme supports meeting the needs and aspirations of women entrepreneurs in the country (Godigit, 2023).

Apart from this, Sri Kurumba Educational and Charitable Trust carried out an initiative named SOBHA to target widows and girls from backward areas. Under this program rehabilitation packages are offered to young women who are widows. They are offered safe and secure living and welfare at no cost. These young mothers whose children are grown up have been constructed and allotted for each family. This also helps in developing an emotional and fulfilling life as most of the widows are married to be considered suitable grooms. In the SOBHA program, 50 widowed mothers were taken, and their children belonged to the panchayat in Kerala. In this program, a basic

allowance is provided to them along with clothing, medical, and other personal accessories.

Mahindra & Mahindra Company also takes the initiative to empower women as women farmers are considered as heroes of the landscape of agriculture. They played a crucial role in family and farming as well rather than having limited resources and restrictions towards access to knowledge. The challenge farming women face is that they are not paid according to their work. Prerna is an initiative carried out by the company to provide knowledge that women are treated as the invisible face of agriculture. Prerna helps in offering opportunities, training, and equipment for better skilled and productive operations of farming. This project involves collaboration between Mahindra & Mahindra, NGO Pradan, and the Central Institution for Women in Agriculture (CIWA) (Fernandes, 2022).

Sterlite Technologies Limited (STL) also organizes an initiative named Jeewan Jyoti Women Empowerment Program which was introduced in the year 2014 and helps empower women to become agents of change. This scheme helps support women at the time of skilling courses along with additional facilities (Csrbox, 2021). The guidance provided is based on personality development and growth in the career which supports providing confidence and potential with considering clear direction. In the region of Maharashtra, women can fulfill their dreams. The program was further extended to urban youth in the region of Aurangabad. It is determined that STL is considered a global leader in end-to-end solutions of the data network. The outcome of this program is that it helps women live a better life by offering them opportunities to enhance their careers. This also aims to equip women with industry-relevant skills

which also guarantees employment at the time of completion of the course (Csrbox, 2021).

It is determined that Godrej & Boyce also developed almost 200 women into businesses as part of CSR on the development of the community. It is observed from studies that increasing income among women has a positive influence on the families' well-being as they tend to spend a larger part of their earnings on education and health. In society, women entrepreneurs also support changing expectations of gender thereby incrementally considering ways for the participation of women in gaining opportunities for education and livelihood. It is determined that the women-led self-help group formulated by the company and along with this agriculture-related activities have been carried out such as poultry farming, nurseries, and floriculture. The company is also committed to achieving progress in the environment and communities. This also supported access to basics including water, education, and improving healthcare which helps in providing a strong foundation for communities for development. This supports the development of rural communities by providing them with solutions for enhancing income (Alliance magazine, 2023).

The garment industry is one of the biggest employers of low-skilled women workers, and it holds the potential to positively affect the lives of women living in low-income countries. The sector takes the initiative to address economic empowerment among women which also helps in developing inclusion and upward mobility in the value chains. In the year 2015, the International Center for Research on Women was funded by the C&A foundation with the support of collective efforts for improving the well-being of workers working in the apparel sector for determining and empowering women in the apparel sector. It is evaluated that violence, informality, and the need

for children need to be addressed to enhance women's lives in the garment industry (Icrw, 2022).

In addition to this, the CSR initiative was carried out in Kolkata for empowerment in which four jewelry brands from Eastern India participated along with their models. In the city, the fashion show was organized and the profits from the show were donated to the empowerment and education of girl children in the country. The talk was held with the noble initiative as CEO of one of the jewelry brands as it was delighted for them to be part of the fashion walk as it involves providing service to the community in an amazing way. This initiative helps in setting an example of fashion and community service going together (Timesofindia, 2023). PACE (Personal Advancement & Career Enhancement) is considered one initiative carried out to empower women. This initiative helps women in the global apparel sector. It is observed women represent the majority of the sector's workforce as some of the women only have the opportunity to advance to positions in management. PACE is formulated to provide foundational skills to women and support them in the workplace and their personal lives. PACE supports providing training to women who have an aspiration for their daughters to participate in a similar program. By the year 2022, 1 million women participated in this program of life changing.

Apart from this, programs are running in India in which textile manufacturer Welspun India collaborated with UN Women, a subsidiary of the United Nations working together to achieve gender equality and empower women. The association helps women at different levels in the value chain access initiatives associated with building skills in technical segments. The main aim here is to create a sustainable livelihood for the development of equality among the workforce by providing them with equal

opportunities along with taking the roles of leadership. Similarly, Marks & Spencer collaborated to empower women, and the company launched a partnership with the Apparel Exports Promotion Council which encourages garment factories to join programs on gender equality, POWER with the help of workplace training. The outcome of this CSR project is that it includes workers from women's factories to improve knowledge on issues of gender equality, violence against women, and sexual harassment (Perfectsourcing, 2019).

Moreover, the director of Raymond Group Mohit Dhanjal also integrated CSR as part of the strategy of the organization. The company focuses on building a sustainable tailoring ecosystem. Raymond is considered an iconic brand and has continued to lead the category of fabric for the last nine decades. It is determined that consumers not only buy the fabric but also convert the fabric into stylish and personalized clothes. Over the past few years, the company integrated a tailoring strategy into business and further delivered the promise of building a sustainable tailoring ecosystem by adopting the 4C program of capacity, capability, connection, and consumer. In the context of capability, Raymond has set up tailoring excellence by upgrading skills in tailoring. Further, concerning the capacity in which vision has been created through a sustainable tailoring ecosystem with increasing and stable opportunities of income for tailors. Additionally, connect is associated with tailoring the community and making sure that there is the dignity of profession and labor. Lastly, the consumer is associated with the convenience of customers in the tailoring platform launched by the company for providing online services to consumers in the marketplace (Apparelresources, 2020).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The present chapter focuses on reviewing the past studies on women empowerment across different business sectors. It can be stated that the empowerment of women is higher in the apparel or fashion industry. The past studies have revealed that women empowerment refers to the sense of self-growth as well as their skills for determining their choices. In this context, it has also been revealed that social changes are also influenced with the help of women empowerment. The present chapter has constructed three different theoretical frameworks to define the present research phenomenon. The theories majorly have focused on women empowerment in initiating CSR activities. The 3R framework includes the “recognize,” “reduce,” and “redistribution” framework. The statement underscores the significance of acknowledging the abilities, accomplishments, and life experiences of women while also tackling the systemic obstacles and prejudices that impede their agency. This entails removing obstacles to involvement and access, such as harassment, discrimination, and a lack of representation, as well as promoting inclusive, egalitarian, and respectful environments. Stereotypes, prejudices, and detrimental conventions that support gender inequity and restrict women's chances and potential are challenged by a recognition framework. In addition to working to undermine inflexible gender norms that limit women's choices and behaviors, it fosters awareness, critical thought, and conversation regarding the societal construction of gender roles and identities (Brooksworth et al., 2021).

Stakeholder theory offers a framework for comprehending the obligations and connections among different parties involved in a company or sector. Stakeholder theory, when applied to women's empowerment, can assist in identifying important stakeholders and their roles in advancing “women's empowerment” and “gender equality.” Stakeholder theory promotes the identification of all parties that have an impact on or have the ability to influence the accomplishment of “women's empowerment” objectives. The idea of stakeholders highlights the significance of assessing and documenting the results of programs aimed at empowering women (Patil and Ramgouda, 2021). This entails establishing precise targets and metrics, gathering pertinent information, and assessing the degree to which “gender equality” and “women's empowerment” goals are being met. Women's empowerment challenges can be critically examined and addressed via the lens of feminist theory. In order to achieve gender equality, it recognizes the structural injustices and power dynamics that lead to women's marginalization and oppression and promotes social, political, and economic change. In making decisions about their lives, bodies, and futures, feminist thought places a strong emphasis on appreciating and respecting women's agency and autonomy. It opposes patriarchal strategies for women's empowerment that dehumanize or disempower women and promotes laws and procedures that give women the authority to make decisions and take charge of their own lives (Tamuli and Mishra, 2022). Traditional gender norms and stereotypes that limit women's opportunities, habits, and aspirations are criticized by feminist philosophy. This chapter has also included women's empowerment in the fashion industry. It has also included the CSR initiatives in the different institutions, groups, rules, and frameworks that influence women's status, rights, and opportunities in

society that are referred to as the institutional context of women's empowerment. A company's dedication to gender equality is essential for encouraging diversity, creating inclusive work environments, and advancing environmentally friendly business practices. Businesses create and put into effect procedures and policies that advance gender equality across the board. This covers guidelines for hiring, promoting, compensating employees fairly, maintaining work-life balance, and preventing harassment. In the context of women's empowerment, the term "customer perspective" refers to how attitudes, actions, and purchasing choices of consumers can impact and encourage programs that advance gender equality and women's empowerment. Lastly, it has also included the research gap that explores the issues which have not been explored yet.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1: 3 R (Recognize, Reduce and Redistribute) Framework of Women

Empowerment

A recognition framework of women empowerment focuses on acknowledging and valuing the contributions, agency, and rights of women in society. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing women's capabilities, achievements, and experiences, as well as addressing the structural barriers and biases that undermine their empowerment. Women's empowerment begins with recognizing and upholding their fundamental “human rights,” including the right to equality, dignity, autonomy, and freedom from discrimination and violence (Paul, 2020). A recognition framework emphasizes the importance of valuing and amplifying women's voices, perspectives, and experiences. This includes creating spaces for women to participate in making decisions, express their views, and contribute to shaping policies, programs, and

initiatives that affect their lives. Women's empowerment recognizes the diversity of women's identities, experiences, and needs across different contexts and intersections of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability, age, and other social factors. It acknowledges the unique challenges and strengths of diverse groups of women and seeks to address intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization. A recognition framework challenges stereotypes, biases, and harmful norms that perpetuate gender inequality and limit women's opportunities and potential. It promotes awareness, critical reflection, and dialogue about the social construction of gender roles and identities and works to dismantle rigid gender norms that restrict women's choices and behaviors (Wülbers and Zimpelmann, 2020). Women's empowerment involves creating inclusive spaces and environments that are safe, supportive, and conducive to full participation of women and in leadership. This includes addressing barriers to access and participation, such as “discriminatory practices,” harassment, and lack of representation, and fostering cultures of respect, equality, and inclusivity (Murmura and Bravi, 2020). A recognition framework challenges stereotypes, biases, and harmful norms that perpetuate gender inequality and limit women's opportunities and potential. It promotes awareness, critical reflection, and dialogue about the social construction of gender roles and identities and works to dismantle rigid gender norms that restrict women's choices and behaviors.

Reduced Framework:

Valuing and amplifying women's voices, perspectives, and experiences in decision-making processes and policy discussions. Recognize and address the diversity of women's identities, experiences, and needs across different contexts and intersections

of social factors. Celebrate women's achievements, leadership, creativity, and contributions to society in various fields. Affirm women's agency and autonomy, supporting their ability to make choices, control their lives, and pursue their aspirations. Challenge stereotypes, biases, and harmful norms that perpetuate gender inequality and limit women's opportunities. Create inclusive spaces and environments that are safe, supportive, and conducive to women's full participation and leadership. Foster solidarity and support among women and allies, building networks and movements for gender equality and women's rights.

Redistribution Framework:

Ensure diverse representation of women in fashion media, including models, designers, and decision-makers. Upholding of the women's rights in the workplace, including fair salary structure, safety workplace, as well as protection from exploitation. Empower women in the fashion industry to have a voice in decision-making processes and advocate for their needs and interests. Create inclusive and supportive environments in the fashion industry that value and respect women's contributions and perspectives. Provide opportunities for women to develop skills and pursue careers in various aspects of the fashion industry, including design, production, and management. Offer support networks and resources for women entrepreneurs and artisans in the fashion industry, including access to funding and mentorship programs. Ensuring the transparency and accountability in the fashion supply chain supports in protecting the rights and well-being of women workers at all phases of production. Advocating all the policies and initiatives that promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the fashion industry, raising awareness about issues such as body positivity, labor rights, and sustainability.

2.2.2: Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory provides a framework for understanding the relationships and responsibilities between various entities involved in an organization or industry.

When applied to women's empowerment, stakeholder theory can help identify key stakeholders and their roles in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

This theory encourages identifying all stakeholders who are affected by or can affect the achievement of women's empowerment goals. This includes women themselves, employees, customers, investors, government agencies, NGOs, local communities, and the media, among others. Stakeholder theory emphasizes understanding the interests, needs, and expectations of different stakeholders regarding women's empowerment. For example, women may seek equal opportunities for advancement, while investors may prioritize the financial performance of companies with strong gender equality policies (Hellström, 2020).

It also emphasizes the importance of engaging with stakeholders through dialogue and collaboration. This involves listening to their perspectives, incorporating their feedback into decision-making processes, and fostering partnerships to advance women's empowerment initiatives. This theory also highlights the responsibility of organizations to consider the interests of all stakeholders, including women, in their decision-making processes. This includes taking proactive measures to address gender disparities, promoting diversity and inclusion, and ensuring transparency and accountability in women's empowerment efforts. The present theory highlights the responsibility of organizations to consider the interests of all stakeholders, including women, in their decision-making processes. This includes taking proactive measures to address gender disparities, promoting diversity and inclusion, and ensuring

transparency and accountability in women's empowerment efforts. In addition, the stakeholder theory recognizes that failing to address the interests of stakeholders, including women, can lead to reputational damage, legal and regulatory risks, and loss of trust and legitimacy. Therefore, organizations need to assess and manage risks related to gender inequality and women's empowerment effectively (Eyasu and Endale, 2020).

Stakeholder theory emphasizes the importance of measuring and reporting on the impact of women's empowerment initiatives. It advocates for continuous improvement in women's empowerment efforts based on feedback from stakeholders and changes in the external environment (Smriti, 2020). This involves adapting strategies, policies, and practices to address emerging challenges and opportunities related to gender equality. By applying stakeholder theory to women's empowerment, organizations can better understand the complex dynamics and relationships involved, identify opportunities for collaboration and innovation, and drive meaningful change towards a more inclusive and equitable society.

Stakeholders in the apparel industry include a diverse range of entities such as manufacturers, suppliers, retailers, consumers, employees, communities where factories are located, NGOs, government agencies, and investors. Each of these stakeholders has interests and expectations regarding various aspects of the industry, including labor practices, environmental sustainability, product quality, and profitability. This theory emphasizes the importance of understanding the interests, needs, and expectations of different stakeholders within the apparel industry (Eliza Sharma, 2020). For example, consumers may prioritize ethically produced and sustainable clothing, while investors may focus on financial performance and risk

management, and employees may seek fair salary structure, safe workplace, as well as opportunities for advancement. This theory also emphasizes the need for engagement and dialogue with stakeholders to address their concerns and incorporate their perspectives into decision-making processes. This involves open communication, consultation, and collaboration with stakeholders to develop policies, practices, and initiatives that reflect their interests and values.

Stakeholder theory highlights the responsibility of apparel companies to focus on the interests of all the stakeholders involved with the current project in their operations as well as in supply chains. This includes taking proactive measures to address social concerns as well as the environmental issues including labor rights, worker safety, environmental pollution, and supply chain transparency. Companies are also accountable for the impacts of their decisions and actions on stakeholders and are expected to uphold ethical standards and legal obligations. Stakeholder theory encourages apparel companies to create shared value by aligning their business objectives with the interests of stakeholders (Samarakoon Mudiyansele, 2022). This involves identifying opportunities to generate economic, social, and environmental benefits for stakeholders while achieving business goals. For example, investing in sustainable supply chain practices can benefit both the environment and local communities while enhancing long-term profitability and brand reputation. It also recognizes that failing to address the interests of stakeholders can lead to reputational damage, legal and regulatory risks, and loss of trust and legitimacy. Therefore, apparel companies need to assess and manage risks related to labor practices, environmental sustainability, supply chain management, and other issues effectively to mitigate negative impacts on stakeholders and the business.

This model also emphasizes the importance of measuring and reporting on the impact of apparel companies' actions and initiatives on stakeholders. This involves monitoring key performance indicators (KPIs), collecting relevant data, and evaluating progress towards achieving social, environmental, and economic objectives. Measuring impact helps companies to track and monitor their performances in all stages, identify the regions where the improvement is needed and demonstrate the accountability to all the stakeholders involved with the project. Stakeholder theory advocates for continuous improvement in the apparel industry based on feedback from stakeholders and changes in the external environment (Satapathy and Paltasingh, 2022). This involves adopting best practices, innovating new solutions, and adapting strategies to address emerging challenges and opportunities related to sustainability, social responsibility, and stakeholder engagement. By applying stakeholder theory principles, apparel companies can enhance their relationships with stakeholders, drive positive social and environmental impact, and build a more sustainable and responsible industry. Therefore, this theory has generated a strong insight against women empowerment in the fashion and apparel industry. This theory also helped to understand the importance of women empowerment in the business sector.

2.2.3: Feminist Theory

Feminist theory provides a critical lens through which to examine and address issues of women's empowerment. It acknowledges the systemic inequalities and power dynamics that contribute to the marginalization and oppression of women and advocates for social, political, and economic transformation to achieve gender equality. This theory identifies that women's experiences of oppression are measured

and evaluated by intersecting factors including “race,” “class,” “ethnicity,” “sexuality,” “ability,” as well as other social identities. Intersectionality highlights the importance of addressing multiple forms of discrimination and oppression to achieve meaningful empowerment for all women. Theory recognizes that women's experiences of oppression are shaped by intersecting factors such as race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and other social identities (Bertola et al., 2020).

Intersectionality highlights the importance of addressing multiple forms of discrimination and oppression to achieve meaningful empowerments for all women. Feminist theory emphasizes the importance of recognizing and respecting women's agency and autonomy in decision-making processes related to their lives, bodies, and futures. It challenges paternalistic approaches to women's empowerment that disempower or infantilize women and advocates for policies and practices that empower women to make informed choices and exercise control over their lives. Feminist theory critiques traditional gender roles and stereotypes that constrain women's aspirations, behaviors, and opportunities. It advocates for challenging and dismantling harmful gender norms and promoting gender equality in all spheres of life, including education, work, politics, and media representation. Feminist theory highlights the economic dimensions of women's empowerment, including access to resources, employment opportunities, and financial independence. It calls for policies and practices that address gender-based economic disparities, such as pay equity, access to affordable childcare, and support for women's entrepreneurship and labor rights (Venkatesh et al., 2021).

Feminist theory emphasizes the importance of women's participation and representation in decision-making processes at all levels of society, including politics,

governance, and civil society. It advocates for policies and initiatives that promote women's political empowerment, leadership development, and civic engagement. Feminist theory addresses gender-based violence as a significant barrier to women's empowerment and calls for comprehensive strategies to prevent violence, support survivors, and hold perpetrators accountable. This includes legal reforms, support services, public awareness campaigns, and efforts to challenge cultural attitudes that condone or tolerate violence against women (Tewari et al., 2021). Feminist theory recognizes the interconnectedness of women's struggles across national, cultural, and geographic contexts and advocates for global solidarity and activism to advance women's rights and empowerment. It emphasizes the importance of amplifying marginalized voices, building alliances, and supporting grassroots movements for gender justice and social change. By applying feminist theory principles, policymakers, activists, and practitioners can develop more holistic and inclusive approaches to women's empowerment that address the root causes of gender inequality and promote the rights, dignity, and well-being of all women.

It provides a critical framework for analyzing and addressing gender dynamics within the apparel industry. This theory highlights the gender disparities within the apparel industry, particularly in terms of labor rights and working conditions. It calls attention to issues such as unequal pay, exploitation of female garment workers, and lack of opportunities for advancement (Behal and Gupta, 2022). By applying feminist principles, stakeholders in the apparel industry can advocate for fair wages, safe working conditions, and equal opportunities for women workers. It emphasizes the importance of diverse representation in the fashion industry, both in terms of the models and influencers featured in advertising and marketing campaigns and the

designers and decision-makers behind the scenes. By challenging narrow beauty standards and promoting diversity in representation, the apparel industry can empower women of all backgrounds and body types.

This theory calls for transparency and accountability throughout the apparel supply chain, particularly regarding the treatment of female workers. This includes ensuring that women are not subjected to exploitation, harassment, or unsafe working conditions in garment factories and other manufacturing facilities. By prioritizing supply chain transparency and accountability, companies can uphold feminist principles and protect the rights of women workers. Feminist theory intersects with environmental and social justice concerns within the apparel industry (Saha et al., 2021). It calls attention to the environmental impact of fast fashion and the disproportionate burden placed on women in communities affected by pollution and resource extraction. By promoting sustainable and ethical practices, such as reducing waste, minimizing pollution, and supporting fair trade initiatives, the apparel industry can advance feminist goals of environmental sustainability and social justice.

Feminist theory encourages consumer activism as a means of promoting gender equality within the apparel industry. By raising awareness about labor rights, environmental issues, and ethical fashion practices, consumers can exert pressure on companies to adopt more feminist-friendly policies and practices. This includes supporting brands that prioritize gender equality, sustainability, and ethical production methods and boycotting companies that engage in exploitative practices. Feminist theory recognizes the importance of economic empowerment for women in the apparel industry. By supporting women entrepreneurs and small business owners, the industry can create opportunities for women to thrive as designers, artisans, and

business leaders (Sudusinghe and Seuring, 2020). This includes providing access to funding, mentorship, and other resources to help women entrepreneurs succeed in a traditionally male-dominated field. Feminist theory informs advocacy efforts aimed at promoting gender equality within the apparel industry. This includes lobbying for legislative reforms to protect the rights of women workers, advocating for corporate accountability measures, and supporting initiatives that empower women economically and socially. By leveraging feminist theory to inform advocacy and policy change, stakeholders can work towards a more equitable and just apparel industry. Overall, feminist theory offers a powerful framework for analyzing and addressing gender inequalities within the apparel industry, from the factory floor to the runway. By applying feminist principles, stakeholders can work towards a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable fashion industry that empowers women at all levels.

2.3 Women's Empowerment In Apparel Industry

Women's empowerment in the apparel industry is a multifaceted issue that encompasses various aspects such as labor rights, gender equality, economic opportunities, and social justice. Historically, the apparel industry has been characterized by significant gender disparities, with women comprising a large portion of the workforce, particularly in garment factories in developing countries. Ensuring that women have equal access to employment opportunities within the industry, including leadership positions and roles traditionally dominated by men. Ensuring that women receive fair wages and benefits for their work, including equal pay for equal work, and access to benefits such as healthcare and maternity leave (Srivastava and Dhiman, 2022). Creating safe and supportive working environments

free from harassment, discrimination, and unsafe working conditions. Providing education and training programs to empower women with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the industry, including technical skills, leadership training, and financial literacy. Promoting transparency within the apparel supply chain to ensure that women are not exploited at any stage of the production process, from garment factories to cotton fields.

Encouraging the formation of labor unions and worker organizations to advocate for the rights and interests of women working in the apparel industry. Providing access to finance, resources, and support networks for women entrepreneurs and small business owners within the apparel industry, including access to credit, mentorship programs, and networking opportunities. Promoting gender equality within the industry through policies, initiatives, and campaigns aimed at challenging gender stereotypes, biases, and discrimination. Investing in community development initiatives that support women's empowerment, such as education programs, healthcare services, and infrastructure development. Collaborating with governments, NGOs, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to implement and scale initiatives aimed at promoting women's empowerment in the apparel industry (Sharma and Kalra, 2020). By addressing these key areas, stakeholders in the apparel industry can contribute to women's empowerment and create a more inclusive and equitable industry for all. In the Indian apparel industry, women's empowerment initiatives are crucial due to the significant participation of women in the workforce, especially in garment manufacturing. Here are some specific strategies and initiatives aimed at promoting women's empowerment in the Indian apparel industry. Implementing programs to provide education and skill development opportunities for women, including

vocational training in garment manufacturing techniques, quality control, and managerial skills. Creating safe and supportive work environments that are free from harassment, discrimination, and unsafe working conditions, with adequate facilities for women such as clean toilets, childcare facilities, and transportation services. Ensuring equal employment opportunities for women at all levels of the industry, from factory workers to managerial positions, through fair recruitment and promotion practices (Brooksworth et al., 2021). Implementing health and well-being programs that address the unique needs of women workers, including access to reproductive healthcare, nutrition programs, and mental health support. Promoting financial inclusion for women workers by providing access to banking services, financial literacy training, and savings and credit programs. Encouraging women's entrepreneurship and business ownership in the apparel industry through initiatives such as women-owned cooperatives, microfinance programs, and mentorship support. Implementing gender-sensitive policies and practices that promote gender equality and address the specific challenges faced by women in the workplace, such as flexible working hours, maternity leave, and anti-discrimination policies. Promoting supply chain transparency and accountability to ensure that women workers are not exploited and that their rights are protected from garment factories to cotton fields. Collaborating with government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), trade unions, and other stakeholders to develop and implement women's empowerment programs and initiatives effectively. Investing in community development initiatives that support women's empowerment beyond the workplace, including education, healthcare, sanitation, and infrastructure development in garment-producing regions. By implementing these strategies and initiatives, the

Indian apparel industry can contribute to the empowerment of women workers, enhance their socio-economic status, and create a more inclusive and equitable industry (Namira and Indriani, 2023).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities play a significant role in promoting women's empowerment in the Indian apparel industry. Many businesses in the sector have recognized the importance of investing in initiatives that support women's rights, gender equality, and socio-economic empowerment. There are some ways in which Indian businesses in the apparel industry can promote women's empowerment through CSR activities. Companies can support educational initiatives aimed at enhancing the skills and knowledge of women workers, including vocational training programs, literacy classes, and life skills training (Vijayarasa and Liu, 2022). By investing in education, women can improve their employability and access better job opportunities within the industry. Conducting empowerment workshops and training sessions focusing on leadership development, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship skills can empower women workers to take on leadership roles, start their businesses, and make informed financial decisions. Providing access to healthcare services and promoting overall well-being among women workers is crucial. CSR initiatives can support health camps, awareness programs on reproductive health, nutrition education, and access to clean drinking water and sanitation facilities in garment manufacturing areas.

Companies can invest in initiatives to create safe and supportive work environments for women, including implementing anti-harassment policies, setting up grievance redressal mechanisms, and providing personal protective equipment (PPE) to ensure their safety. Encouraging women's representation in decision-making bodies within

the company and supporting initiatives that promote gender diversity in leadership positions can foster a more inclusive workplace culture (Saha et al., 2022).

Implementing livelihood enhancement programs that provide alternative income-generation opportunities for women outside of the garment industry can help reduce their economic vulnerability and improve their socio-economic status. Investing in community development projects in garment-producing regions, such as infrastructure development, education, healthcare, and sanitation facilities, can have a positive impact on the lives of women and their families beyond the workplace.

Engaging with suppliers to ensure compliance with labor standards and promoting capacity-building initiatives to enhance the skills and capabilities of women workers throughout the supply chain can contribute to their empowerment. Regular monitoring and evaluation of CSR initiatives focusing on women's empowerment are essential to assess their effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and ensure accountability and transparency in implementation. Collaborating with other stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, civil society organizations, and international development agencies, can help leverage resources and expertise to scale up efforts towards women's empowerment in the apparel industry (Acharyya and Agarwala, 2022). By incorporating these CSR activities into their business practices, Indian companies in the apparel industry can make meaningful contributions to advancing women's empowerment and creating more inclusive and sustainable supply chains. In addition, women's empowerment in the fashion industry is an ongoing movement aimed at promoting gender equality, diversity, and inclusivity within the sector. Promoting diverse representations of women in fashion advertising, media, and runways is crucial for challenging traditional beauty standards and promoting

inclusivity. This includes featuring women of different body types, ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds. Empowering women to hold leadership and decision-making positions within fashion companies, including executive roles, creative director positions, and board memberships, helps break down gender barriers and fosters a more inclusive industry culture (Karlsson and Ramasar, 2020). Ensuring fair and safe working conditions for women employed in all aspects of the fashion supply chain, from garment manufacturing to retail, is essential. This includes fair wages, reasonable working hours, access to healthcare, and protection from exploitation and discrimination. Promoting and supporting women-owned fashion businesses, including designers, entrepreneurs, and artisans, through mentorship programs, access to funding, and networking opportunities, helps empower women economically and fosters innovation and creativity in the industry.

Providing education and skill development opportunities for women interested in pursuing careers in fashion, including design, production, marketing, and merchandising, helps empower them to achieve their professional goals and contribute meaningfully to the industry. Embracing sustainable and ethical fashion practices, including environmentally friendly production methods, fair trade principles, and transparency in the supply chain, not only benefits the planet but also supports women artisans and workers who are often disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and exploitative labor practices (Jagannathan and Venthirajan, 2020). Supporting social impact initiatives that focus on women's empowerment, such as community development projects, education programs, and skill-building workshops, helps address the broader socio-economic challenges faced by women in fashion-producing regions. Promoting body positivity and self-

expression in fashion by celebrating diverse beauty ideals and encouraging women to embrace their unique identities and personal styles fosters a more inclusive and empowering fashion culture. Engaging in advocacy efforts and raising awareness about women's rights issues within the fashion industry, including gender-based violence, pay equity, and workplace discrimination, helps drive positive change and hold companies accountable for their actions. Fostering collaboration and solidarity among women in the fashion industry, including designers, models, activists, and consumers, strengthens the collective voice of women and drives progress towards a more equitable and inclusive industry. By addressing these aspects of women's empowerment in the fashion industry, stakeholders can work towards creating a more diverse, inclusive, and socially responsible sector that empowers women at all levels of the supply chain.

2.4 CSR Initiatives Targeting Women in Apparel Industry

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives targeting women in the apparel industry can have a significant impact on promoting gender equality, empowering women, and improving working conditions. Implementing health and well-being initiatives that focus on women's specific needs, including reproductive health services, access to maternal healthcare, nutrition programs, and mental health support. Providing training programs and educational opportunities to enhance women's skills and knowledge, including vocational training in garment manufacturing techniques, leadership development, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship skills. Organizing workshops and training sessions that focus on building women's confidence, leadership skills, and decision-making abilities, empowering them to take on leadership roles within the industry (Kumar and Shobana, 2023).

Implementing gender-sensitive policies and practices within apparel companies, including equal pay for equal work, flexible working arrangements, parental leave policies, and zero-tolerance policies for gender-based discrimination and harassment. Supporting women-owned businesses and entrepreneurs within the apparel industry through mentorship programs, access to finance, technical assistance, and networking opportunities. Ensuring safe and supportive working environments for women in garment factories, including measures to prevent workplace harassment and violence, adequate lighting and ventilation, ergonomic workstations, and access to clean drinking water and sanitation facilities. Promoting transparency and accountability within the apparel supply chain to ensure that women workers are not exploited and that their rights are protected, including regular audits, supplier training programs, and grievance mechanisms (Ahmed, 2021).

Investing in community development projects in garment-producing regions that benefit women and their families, including education programs, healthcare services, childcare facilities, and infrastructure development. Promoting financial inclusion for women workers through initiatives such as access to banking services, savings and credit programs, and financial literacy training to help them build financial resilience and independence. Engaging in advocacy efforts and raising awareness about women's rights issues within the apparel industry, including gender equality, labor rights, and social responsibility, to drive positive change and promote a culture of gender equity and inclusion. By implementing these CSR initiatives, apparel companies can contribute to advancing women's empowerment, improving working conditions, and fostering a more equitable and inclusive industry for women workers (Dey et al., 2023).

“Corporate Social Responsibility” (CSR) initiatives in women's empowerment encompass a range of efforts aimed at promoting gender equality, advancing women's rights, and enhancing opportunities for women's economic and social advancement. Providing scholarships, educational programs, and vocational training opportunities for women and girls, particularly in underserved communities, to improve their access to quality education and develop relevant skills for employment (Rajesh, 2020). Supporting women's entrepreneurship and economic inclusion through initiatives such as microfinance programs, business development training, access to markets, and mentorship opportunities for women-owned businesses. Investing in healthcare initiatives that address women's specific health needs, including maternal health services, reproductive healthcare, HIV/AIDS prevention, nutrition programs, and mental health support (Chhabra and Guliani, 2022).

Implementing policies and practices to promote gender diversity and inclusion in the workplace, including equal employment opportunities, flexible work arrangements, parental leave policies, and leadership development programs for women. Promoting women's empowerment throughout the supply chain by ensuring fair wages, safe working conditions, and opportunities for advancement for women workers in manufacturing and agricultural sectors. Engaging in advocacy efforts and raising awareness about gender equality issues through public campaigns, partnerships with NGOs, and participation in policy dialogues to drive systemic change and social progress. Investing in community development projects that benefit women and girls, such as access to clean water and sanitation, infrastructure development, education programs, and initiatives to combat gender-based violence (Banerjee, 2020).

Leveraging technology and innovation to address gender disparities and empower women, including digital literacy programs, access to mobile banking services, and initiatives to bridge the digital gender divide. Integrating gender perspectives into environmental sustainability initiatives, including promoting women's participation in natural resource management, climate adaptation, and renewable energy projects. Collaborating with government agencies, civil society organizations, academia, and other stakeholders to leverage resources, share knowledge, and scale up initiatives aimed at promoting women's empowerment and gender equality. These CSR initiatives play a crucial role in advancing women's empowerment, creating more inclusive and equitable societies, and contributing to sustainable development outcomes. By aligning business interests with social impact goals, companies can make meaningful contributions to women's rights and gender equality (Srivastava and Srivastava, 2023).

In the fashion industry, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives focused on women's empowerment are essential for promoting gender equality, improving working conditions, and fostering inclusive practices. Supporting women entrepreneurs and artisans by sourcing products from women-owned businesses and providing them with access to markets, training, and resources to help them succeed in the fashion industry. Offering leadership development programs, mentorship opportunities, and networking events specifically tailored to women in the fashion industry to help them advance in their careers and break through the glass ceiling. Implementing policies and programs to ensure gender equity in fashion supply chains, including fair wages, safe working conditions, and opportunities for women's advancement in manufacturing and production facilities (Mallick and Sahoo, 2023).

Providing scholarships, vocational training, and educational programs for women and girls in fashion-producing regions to improve their skills and employment prospects within the industry. Offering health and wellness programs, including access to reproductive healthcare, nutrition education, mental health support, and workplace wellness initiatives, to improve the well-being of women workers in the fashion industry. Taking a stand against gender-based violence by implementing zero-tolerance policies, providing training on prevention and response, and supporting initiatives that raise awareness and provide support for survivors. Embracing diversity and inclusion in all aspects of the fashion industry, including advertising, marketing, hiring practices, and representation on runways and in fashion media, to reflect the diversity of women's experiences and identities (Nazrul and Rahman, 2021).

Incorporating gender perspectives into sustainability initiatives within the fashion industry, including promoting ethical production practices, reducing environmental impact, and empowering women as agents of change in creating a more sustainable fashion industry. Educating consumers about the importance of supporting brands that prioritize women's empowerment and gender equality in their supply chains, and advocating for policies and practices that promote women's rights and well-being in the fashion industry. Collaborating with NGOs, government agencies, and other stakeholders to leverage resources, share best practices, and scale up initiatives aimed at promoting women's empowerment in the fashion industry. By implementing these CSR initiatives, fashion companies can play a significant role in advancing women's rights, improving the lives of women workers, and creating a more inclusive and sustainable fashion industry (Brooksworth et al., 2022).

CSR initiatives targeting women in the fashion industry are becoming increasingly common as companies recognize the importance of addressing gender equality and promoting women's empowerment throughout their supply chains. Many fashion companies implement programs aimed at empowering women in their supply chains, particularly in developing countries where garment production is prevalent (VENKATESH and SRIDHAR, 2022). These programs may include initiatives such as skills training, financial literacy training, entrepreneurship development, and access to microfinance, aiming to enhance women's economic opportunities and improve their livelihoods. Ensuring fair wages and safe working conditions for women garment workers is a critical aspect of CSR in the fashion industry. Companies may implement initiatives to monitor compliance with labor standards, provide training on workers' rights, support collective bargaining efforts, and invest in workplace health and safety measures to protect the well-being of women workers. Fashion companies are increasingly focusing on promoting gender diversity and inclusion within their own organizations. This may involve setting targets for gender representation in leadership positions, implementing policies to prevent gender-based discrimination and harassment, and providing support for work-life balance and parental leave to support women's career advancement (Murmura and Bravi, 2020).

Many fashion brands are taking steps to increase transparency and accountability in their supply chains, including efforts to trace the origin of raw materials and track labor conditions throughout the production process. By ensuring transparency, companies can identify and address gender-related issues such as discrimination, exploitation, and gender-based violence within their supply chains. Some fashion companies actively support women-owned businesses by sourcing products or

services from women entrepreneurs and artisans. These initiatives help create economic opportunities for women, promote gender equality in business, and contribute to the empowerment of women-led enterprises in the fashion industry (Chhabra and Guliani, 2022). Fashion companies may engage in educational initiatives and awareness-raising campaigns to promote gender equality and women's empowerment among their employees, customers, and stakeholders. These efforts may include workshops, seminars, and public advocacy campaigns focused on topics such as gender stereotypes, women's rights, and the importance of supporting women in the fashion industry. Collaboration with NGOs, civil society organizations, governments, and other stakeholders is essential for effective CSR initiatives targeting women in the fashion industry. By partnering with local organizations and leveraging their expertise and networks, fashion companies can amplify the impact of their initiatives and address complex social and economic challenges facing women in the industry. Overall, CSR initiatives targeting women in the fashion industry play a crucial role in promoting gender equality, empowering women, and creating more sustainable and ethical supply chains (Salman and Gupta, 2021). By investing in women's empowerment, fashion companies can drive positive social change and contribute to a more inclusive and equitable industry for women workers and entrepreneurs alike.

2.5 Challenges and Critiques of Women's Empowerment Programme

Women's empowerment programs have been implemented globally with the aim of advancing gender equality and promoting women's rights. While these programs have seen some successes, they also face several challenges and critiques. One of the primary challenges is the effective implementation of women's empowerment

programs. This includes issues such as lack of resources, insufficient training, and capacity constraints within implementing organizations. Without proper resources and support, programs may struggle to reach their intended beneficiaries and achieve their objectives. Deeply entrenched socio-cultural norms and attitudes can hinder the effectiveness of women's empowerment programs. In many societies, gender roles are rigidly defined, and women may face resistance when attempting to challenge traditional norms (Parveen, 2023). Cultural beliefs about women's roles in the family and society can limit their opportunities for empowerment. Economic factors play a significant role in women's empowerment. Poverty and lack of economic opportunities can prevent women from fully participating in empowerment programs. Additionally, women may lack access to financial resources, such as credit and capital, which are essential for starting businesses or pursuing education and training. Education is a key driver of women's empowerment, yet many women and girls around the world still face barriers to accessing quality education. Factors such as poverty, cultural norms, and discriminatory practices may prevent girls from attending school or completing their education, limiting their opportunities for empowerment. Women's empowerment programs may face political resistance in some contexts. In patriarchal societies or authoritarian regimes, political leaders may perceive gender equality initiatives as a threat to existing power structures. As a result, these programs may encounter opposition or be subject to censorship or funding cuts (Dhar, 2021). Evaluating the impact of women's empowerment programs can be challenging. Measuring changes in attitudes, behaviors, and socio-economic outcomes requires robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks, as well as long-term commitment and

investment. Without accurate data on program outcomes, it can be difficult to assess their effectiveness and make informed decisions about future interventions.

Women's empowerment programs often overlook the intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization that women may face based on factors such as race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and disability. Failing to address these intersecting identities can perpetuate inequalities and limit the effectiveness of empowerment efforts (Szegedi et al., 2023). There is a risk of women's empowerment initiatives being tokenistic or instrumentalized for political or economic gain. In some cases, governments or organizations may implement superficial measures to demonstrate their commitment to gender equality without addressing underlying structural inequalities or power imbalances. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that tackles the root causes of gender inequality, promotes women's rights and agency, and engages diverse stakeholders, including governments, civil society organizations, and communities (Rani and Natarajan, 2020).

Empowerment programs should be designed and implemented in ways that are contextually relevant, inclusive, and sustainable, with a focus on promoting systemic change and advancing women's rights and opportunities over the long term.

2.6 Impact Assessment of CSR Activities on Women's Empowerment

Assessing the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities on women's empowerment requires a comprehensive evaluation framework that considers various dimensions of empowerment and the specific context in which the activities are implemented. Define clear indicators of women's empowerment that capture different dimensions such as economic, social, political, and psychological empowerment

(Tamuli and Mishra, 2022). These indicators could include factors like income levels, access to education and healthcare, decision-making power, leadership roles, and self-esteem. Collect baseline data to understand the status of women in the target communities before implementing CSR activities. This could involve surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, and secondary data analysis to assess existing levels of empowerment and identify areas for improvement. Develop a monitoring and evaluation plan to track the progress and outcomes of CSR activities over time. This plan should include regular data collection, progress reports, and feedback mechanisms to ensure accountability and transparency in the implementation process. Participation of women and community members in the design, implementation, and evaluation of CSR activities help in ensuring their needs and priorities are addressed. Participatory approaches such as community consultations, participatory rural appraisals, and women's empowerment workshops can help build ownership and sustainability (Biswas and Tiwari, 2021). Conducting the longitudinal studies help in making assessment of the long-term impact of CSR activities on women's empowerment. Follow-up surveys and qualitative interviews conducted at regular intervals can provide insights into changes in women's lives over time and help identify factors that contribute to sustained empowerment. Analysis of the impact of CSR activities at multiple levels, including individual, household, community, and institutional levels help in understanding how empowerment processes unfold within different contexts and identify opportunities for scaling up successful interventions. Consider intersectional factors such as race, ethnicity, class, age, disability, and geographical location in the impact assessment process. Recognize that women's

experiences of empowerment are shaped by multiple identities and social structures, and tailor interventions accordingly.

Collaborate with local stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, community-based organizations, and women's groups, to leverage resources, expertise, and networks for more effective empowerment outcomes. Ensure that the impact assessment process adheres to ethical standards, including informed consent, privacy protection, and confidentiality of sensitive information. Respect cultural norms and values in data collection and analysis, and prioritize the well-being and agency of women and marginalized groups. Share findings from the impact assessment with relevant stakeholders through workshops, conferences, reports, and publications (Tanguturi, 2020). Foster a culture of learning and adaptation by using evaluation results to inform future CSR strategies and programming. By adopting a holistic and participatory approach to impact assessment, CSR initiatives can contribute to meaningful and sustainable improvements in women's empowerment, thereby promoting gender equality and social inclusion in the communities they serve.

2.7 Policy and Institutional Contexts

Women's empowerment policies are essential for promoting gender equality and ensuring that women have equal rights, opportunities, and access to resources. Enact and enforce laws that promote gender equality and protect women's rights in areas such as employment, education, healthcare, property ownership, inheritance, and protection against violence and discrimination. Legal reforms can address discriminatory practices and provide a framework for addressing gender-based disparities. Implement policies to promote girls' education and eliminate barriers to schooling, such as gender-based violence, child marriage, and lack of access to

schools. Invest in initiatives that provide quality education and skills training for women and girls, including vocational training, STEM education, and adult literacy programs. Develop policies to promote women's economic empowerment, including equal pay for equal work, access to financial services, credit, and markets, support for women-owned businesses, and initiatives to promote women's participation in non-traditional sectors and leadership roles in the workforce (Walters, 2022).

Ensure access to comprehensive healthcare services, including reproductive healthcare, maternal and child health services, family planning, and HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. Policies should prioritize women's reproductive rights, including access to contraception, safe abortion services, and sexual health education. Implement policies to promote women's political participation and leadership, including quotas for women in elected and appointed positions, support for women's political parties and grassroots organizations, and initiatives to enhance women's political skills and confidence (Gautam, 2020). Develop social protection policies that address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women, including maternity leave, childcare support, eldercare services, and access to social security and pensions. Policies should aim to reduce the gender gap in social protection coverage and ensure that women have access to essential social services.

Integrate a gender perspective into all policies, programs, and projects across government departments and agencies. Gender mainstreaming involves analyzing the differential impacts of policies on women and men and taking proactive measures to address gender inequalities and promote gender equality in all areas of governance and decision-making. Ensure access to legal aid services and mechanisms for women who face discrimination, violence, or other forms of injustice. Provide support for

women's rights organizations, legal clinics, and helplines to assist women in accessing justice and seeking redress for violations of their rights (Singh and Singh, 2021).

Develop policies to promote gender-sensitive media and communications that challenge stereotypes, promote positive portrayals of women, and raise awareness about gender issues. Support media literacy programs and initiatives to increase women's access to media platforms and opportunities for participation in public discourse. Strengthen data collection systems and monitoring mechanisms to track progress on women's empowerment indicators and assess the impact of policies and programs. Ensure that data disaggregated by sex and other relevant factors are collected and used to inform policy formulation, planning, and decision-making. These policies should be implemented as part of a comprehensive and coordinated strategy involving government institutions, civil society organizations, the private sector, and other stakeholders to advance gender equality and women's empowerment at all levels of society (Hellström, 2020).

The institutional context of women's empowerment refers to the various structures, organizations, policies, and systems that shape women's opportunities, rights, and status within society. Understanding the institutional context is crucial for designing effective strategies and interventions to promote gender equality and empower women. Government institutions play a central role in promoting women's empowerment through policy formulation, implementation, and enforcement (Alam and Islam, 2021). This includes ministries or departments responsible for women's affairs, gender equality, education, health, labor, justice, and social welfare. These institutions develop and implement laws, programs, and policies to address gender disparities and protect women's rights. The legal and regulatory frameworks establish

the foundation for women's empowerment by guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities under the law. This includes laws prohibiting discrimination based on gender, ensuring access to education, healthcare, employment, and property rights, as well as legislation addressing violence against women and girls. Effective implementation and enforcement of these laws are essential for advancing women's rights and empowerment.

Civil society organizations (CSOs), including women's rights groups, advocacy organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community-based organizations (CBOs), play a critical role in advancing women's empowerment. These organizations provide essential services, such as healthcare, education, legal aid, and livelihood support, and advocate for policy change, raise awareness, and mobilize communities to address gender inequalities and promote women's rights. International organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), World Bank, and regional bodies, as well as bilateral and multilateral donors, provide financial and technical support for women's empowerment initiatives globally. They also set international standards and norms, monitor progress on gender equality, and support capacity building and institutional strengthening in partner countries to advance women's rights and empowerment (Mishra and Mohapatra, 2020). The private sector can contribute to women's empowerment through corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, gender-inclusive employment practices, women's entrepreneurship development, supply chain policies, and investments in women-owned businesses. Engaging the private sector as a partner in women's empowerment efforts can create economic opportunities for women, promote gender equality in the workplace, and contribute to sustainable development.

Media and communication platforms play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions, attitudes, and discourse around gender roles and women's rights. By promoting gender-sensitive and inclusive media content, raising awareness about gender issues, challenging stereotypes, and amplifying women's voices and experiences, the media can contribute to positive social change and support women's empowerment efforts. Academic and research institutions generate knowledge, evidence, and analysis on gender issues, women's empowerment, and best practices for promoting gender equality. Research findings inform policy and program development, contribute to advocacy efforts, and help identify gaps and priorities for action in advancing women's rights and empowerment. Cultural and social norms shape perceptions of gender roles, expectations, and behaviors within society. Institutions such as religion, education, family, and community influence these norms and may either facilitate or hinder women's empowerment (Gazzola et al., 2020). Addressing harmful norms and promoting gender-transformative approaches are essential for challenging gender inequalities and promoting women's rights and agency. Understanding the institutional context of women's empowerment requires a multi-dimensional analysis that considers the interplay of formal and informal institutions, power dynamics, and socio-cultural factors shaping women's lives and opportunities. By addressing structural barriers and leveraging institutional mechanisms, stakeholders can work together to create an enabling environment for women's empowerment and advance gender equality across sectors and societies.

2.8 Corporate Commitment to Gender Equality

Corporate commitment to gender equality is crucial for fostering inclusive workplaces, promoting diversity, and driving sustainable business practices.

Companies develop and implement policies and practices that promote gender equality throughout the organization. This includes policies related to recruitment, hiring, promotion, pay equity, work-life balance, and harassment prevention.

Companies may also establish diversity and inclusion committees or task forces to oversee the implementation of these policies and monitor progress. Companies commit to ensuring equal pay for equal work, regardless of gender. This involves conducting regular pay equity analyses to identify and address any disparities in compensation between male and female employees performing similar roles.

Transparent salary structures and performance evaluation processes can help promote fairness and accountability (Patil and Ramgouda, 2021).

Companies implement diversity and inclusion initiatives to create a supportive and inclusive work environment for employees of all genders. This may include unconscious bias training, diversity recruitment programs, mentorship and sponsorship opportunities for women, affinity groups or employee resource groups (ERGs), and flexible work arrangements to accommodate diverse needs (Szegeedi et al., 2021). Companies strive to increase the representation of women in leadership positions, including the board of directors, executive team, and senior management. Setting targets or quotas for female representation in leadership roles can help drive progress and hold the organization accountable for achieving gender balance at all levels of the company. Companies promote gender equality in their supply chains by sourcing products and services from women-owned businesses and suppliers that prioritize gender diversity and inclusion. Supplier diversity programs may include outreach, capacity-building, and procurement opportunities for women-owned enterprises to support their growth and sustainability. Companies disclose information

about their gender diversity and inclusion efforts, including workforce demographics, representation metrics, pay equity analyses, and progress toward gender equality goals. Transparent reporting allows stakeholders, including investors, employees, customers, and the public, to assess the company's commitment to gender equality and hold it accountable for its performance.

Companies integrate gender equality into their CSR initiatives and philanthropic activities by supporting programs and organizations that promote women's empowerment, education, healthcare, economic development, and leadership. CSR efforts may include partnerships with non-profit organizations, funding for gender-focused projects, and employee volunteering opportunities (Walters, 2022).

Companies engage with stakeholders, including employees, investors, customers, suppliers, and communities, to solicit feedback, address concerns, and collaborate on gender equality initiatives. Building partnerships with external stakeholders can amplify the impact of corporate efforts and foster collective action toward achieving gender equality goals. Companies integrate gender considerations into their corporate governance practices by ensuring diverse representation on the board of directors, establishing board committees on diversity and inclusion, and incorporating gender-related metrics into executive compensation and performance evaluation frameworks. Strong corporate governance structures can help embed gender equality principles into the company's decision-making processes and culture. Companies commit to continuous learning, improvement, and innovation in their approach to gender equality. This may involve benchmarking against industry peers, conducting employee surveys and feedback sessions, participating in industry-wide initiatives and collaborations, and adapting policies and practices based on evidence and best

practices. Overall, corporate commitment to gender equality requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that addresses systemic barriers, promotes diversity and inclusion, and fosters a culture of respect, fairness, and equal opportunity for all employees, regardless of gender. By prioritizing gender equality, companies not only benefit their employees and communities but also contribute to a more equitable and sustainable world.

Corporate commitment to women's empowerment is crucial for advancing gender equality in the workplace and beyond. Corporations can demonstrate their commitment to women's empowerment by implementing gender-inclusive policies and practices. This includes policies related to recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention that promote equal opportunities for women at all levels of the organization. Flexible work arrangements, parental leave policies, and childcare support can also help create a more inclusive work environment for women. Ensuring equal pay for equal work is essential for women's empowerment. Corporations should conduct regular pay equity analyses to identify and address gender-based wage gaps.

Additionally, providing equal access to benefits such as healthcare, retirement plans, and professional development opportunities helps support women's economic security and advancement within the organization.

Corporations should strive to achieve gender balance in leadership positions and governance structures. This involves setting targets and benchmarks for increasing the representation of women on boards of directors, executive teams, and other leadership roles. Mentoring, sponsorship, and leadership development programs can help support the advancement of women into leadership positions. Fostering an inclusive workplace culture that values diversity and promotes respect and dignity for all

employees is essential for women's empowerment. Companies should prioritize diversity and inclusion initiatives, provide training on unconscious bias and harassment prevention, and create safe spaces for employees to raise concerns and seek support (Alam and Islam, 2021). Corporations can promote women's economic empowerment through their supply chain by sourcing from women-owned businesses and providing capacity-building support to women entrepreneurs. Supplier diversity programs and partnerships with women's business associations can help increase opportunities for women-owned enterprises to access markets and grow their businesses.

Companies can demonstrate their commitment to women's empowerment through community engagement initiatives and philanthropic investments. Supporting programs and organizations that address issues such as girls' education, women's health, economic development, and gender-based violence prevention can make a positive impact on women and girls in the communities where they operate. Corporate commitment to women's empowerment should be transparent and accountable.

Companies should regularly report on their progress toward gender equality goals, disclose gender-related data and metrics, and engage with stakeholders, including employees, investors, customers, and civil society organizations, to ensure accountability and drive continuous improvement. Collaborating with other stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, academia, and other companies, can amplify the impact of corporate efforts to promote women's empowerment.

Partnerships can facilitate knowledge sharing, resource mobilization, and collective action to address systemic barriers to gender equality and drive positive change at scale. By demonstrating a genuine commitment to women's empowerment through

concrete actions and sustained investment, corporations can contribute to building more inclusive and equitable societies where women have equal opportunities to thrive and succeed (Acharyya and Agarwala, 2022).

2.9 Consumer Perspective

Consumer perspective in women's empowerment refers to how consumers' attitudes, behaviors, and purchasing decisions can influence and support initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality and empowering women. Consumers can drive change by demanding products and services that promote gender equality and empower women. This includes supporting brands that have gender-inclusive marketing, offer fair wages and working conditions for women in their supply chains, and prioritize women's leadership and representation within their organizations. Consumers increasingly prioritize ethical and sustainable brands that align with their values, including those related to gender equality and women's empowerment. Companies that demonstrate a commitment to gender equality through their business practices, such as supporting women-owned businesses, investing in women's education and training, and addressing gender-based violence, are more likely to attract and retain socially conscious consumers.

Social media platforms provide consumers with a powerful tool for advocacy and activism on women's empowerment issues. Consumers can use social media to amplify the voices of women, raise awareness about gender inequalities, hold companies accountable for their actions, and advocate for change in policies and practices that affect women's rights and opportunities. Consumers can choose to support women-owned businesses and female entrepreneurs by purchasing their products and services. Supporting women entrepreneurs not only contributes to

economic empowerment but also helps challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes about women's capabilities as business leaders. Consumers can advocate for gender-neutral marketing and advertising that challenges stereotypes and promotes positive representations of women and girls. By supporting brands that use inclusive imagery and messaging, consumers can help create a more diverse and inclusive media landscape that reflects the realities and aspirations of women and girls (Srivastava and Dhiman, 2022).

Investors and consumers can prioritize gender-lens investing, which involves directing capital toward companies and organizations that promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Gender-lens investors consider factors such as gender diversity in leadership, workplace policies that support women's advancement, and products and services that benefit women and girls. Consumers can participate in consumer activism campaigns that target companies and industries with poor track records on gender equality and women's empowerment. By boycotting or divesting from companies that engage in exploitative practices or discriminatory behavior toward women, consumers can exert pressure for change and encourage companies to adopt more responsible and inclusive business practices. Educating consumers about the importance of women's empowerment and providing information about how their purchasing decisions can make a difference can help foster a culture of conscious consumption. Companies, NGOs, and other stakeholders can collaborate to develop educational campaigns and initiatives that raise awareness about gender equality issues and empower consumers to take action in support of women's rights and empowerment. By considering the consumer perspective in women's empowerment efforts, companies and organizations can engage consumers as partners in advancing

gender equality and creating positive social change that benefits women and girls globally (Saha et al., 2021).

The consumer perspective in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities related to women's empowerment is significant as it influences consumer behavior, brand reputation, and long-term sustainability efforts. Consumers today are increasingly drawn to brands that demonstrate a commitment to social causes, including women's empowerment. CSR initiatives aimed at empowering women can enhance a company's brand image and reputation, leading to increased consumer loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and competitive advantage in the marketplace. Companies that prioritize women's empowerment through CSR activities build trust and confidence among consumers. When consumers see that a company is actively working to address gender inequality, promote women's rights, and support women's economic and social empowerment, they are more likely to support that company and its products or services.

Consumer perceptions of a company's CSR activities, including those related to women's empowerment, can influence their purchase intentions and behavior. Studies have shown that consumers are willing to pay a premium for products and services from socially responsible companies, especially those that support causes aligned with their values, such as gender equality and women's empowerment. Consumers often use social media platforms to advocate for causes they care about, including women's empowerment. CSR activities that empower women can generate positive social media buzz, engagement, and advocacy among consumers, amplifying the impact of these initiatives and enhancing brand visibility and awareness. Consumers value transparency and accountability in CSR initiatives, particularly those related to

women's empowerment. Companies that are transparent about their goals, strategies, and outcomes in this area build credibility and trust with consumers, who are more likely to support companies that demonstrate a genuine commitment to making a positive impact on women's lives (Murmura and Bravi, 2020).

CSR activities focused on women's empowerment can serve as a platform for educating consumers about gender inequality, women's rights, and the importance of supporting women's economic and social empowerment (Tamuli and Mishra, 2022). By raising awareness and fostering dialogue on these issues, companies can engage consumers as allies in the fight for gender equality and inspire them to take action in their own lives and communities. Engaging with consumers to gather feedback and input on CSR initiatives related to women's empowerment can help companies better understand consumer preferences, expectations, and concerns in this area. By involving consumers in the design, implementation, and evaluation of these initiatives, companies can ensure that their efforts are relevant, impactful, and aligned with consumer values and priorities. In summary, the consumer perspective plays a crucial role in shaping CSR activities related to women's empowerment. Companies that prioritize women's empowerment not only contribute to positive social change but also stand to benefit from enhanced consumer trust, loyalty, and support in the marketplace. By aligning CSR efforts with consumer values and expectations, companies can create meaningful and sustainable impact for women and girls around the world.

2.10 Research Gap

Research gaps in women's empowerment related to CSR initiatives can be identified through various lenses. Despite the proliferation of CSR initiatives targeting women's

empowerment, there may be a lack of comprehensive research on the effectiveness of these programs. Research could focus on evaluating the impact of CSR initiatives on women's economic, social, and political empowerment outcomes, such as income generation, access to education and healthcare, leadership opportunities, and participation in decision-making processes (Dhar, 2021). There is a need for research that explores the intersectionality of gender with other dimensions of identity, such as race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and disability, in the context of CSR initiatives. Understanding how different forms of discrimination and marginalization intersect and shape women's experiences of empowerment can inform more inclusive and intersectional approaches to CSR.

Many CSR initiatives targeting women's empowerment focus on short-term interventions or projects without considering their long-term sustainability and impact. Research could examine the factors that contribute to the sustainability of CSR initiatives over time, including organizational capacity, community engagement, partnership building, and integration into broader development strategies. Research gaps may exist in understanding the role of partnerships and collaboration in enhancing the effectiveness of CSR initiatives for women's empowerment. Studies could explore how partnerships between corporations, government agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders contribute to leveraging resources, sharing expertise, and scaling up successful interventions. There is a need for research on developing robust measurement and evaluation frameworks for assessing the impact of CSR initiatives on women's empowerment (Mishra and Mohapatra, 2020). This includes identifying appropriate indicators, methodologies, and data collection tools for measuring

changes in women's empowerment outcomes and understanding the causal pathways through which CSR interventions influence these outcomes.

Research could examine issues of corporate accountability and transparency in the context of CSR initiatives targeting women's empowerment. This includes investigating mechanisms for ensuring transparency in corporate reporting on CSR activities, accountability to stakeholders, and adherence to human rights and gender equality principles. Research gaps may exist in understanding the policy and regulatory environment that shapes CSR initiatives for women's empowerment. Studies could examine the role of government policies, regulations, and incentives in incentivizing corporate action on gender equality, as well as the impact of legal frameworks on the implementation and effectiveness of CSR initiatives (Mishra and Mohapatra, 2020). There is a need for research that identifies and addresses the challenges and barriers faced by corporations in implementing effective CSR initiatives for women's empowerment. This includes understanding organizational constraints, cultural and social barriers, resource limitations, and competing priorities that may hinder companies' efforts to advance gender equality. By addressing these research gaps, scholars and practitioners can contribute to advancing knowledge and best practices in the field of CSR for women's empowerment, ultimately driving positive social change and sustainable development outcomes for women and girls worldwide.

2.11. Summary

It is concluded that the topic of women's empowerment in the fashion business is complex and includes issues of social justice, gender equality, labor rights, and economic opportunity. In the past, there have been notable gender differences in the

apparel business, with women making up a sizable share of the labor, especially in developing nation garment factories. Women's empowerment in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities is a multifaceted concept that involves the integration of gender equality principles into corporate strategies, policies, and practices.

Women's empowerment in CSR activities encompasses efforts by corporations to promote gender equality, advance women's rights, and enhance women's economic, social, and political empowerment. It involves addressing systemic barriers and inequalities that prevent women from realizing their full potential and participating fully in society. Effective CSR initiatives for women's empowerment require the strategic integration of gender considerations into corporate planning, decision-making, and operations. This involves adopting a gender-responsive approach that considers the differential impacts of corporate activities on women and men and takes proactive measures to promote gender equality. CSR activities targeting women's empowerment can address a range of issues, including economic empowerment (e.g., equal pay, access to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities), social empowerment (e.g., access to education, healthcare, and social services), political empowerment (e.g., participation in decision-making processes, leadership roles), and cultural empowerment (e.g., challenging stereotypes, promoting gender-sensitive norms).

Collaboration with stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, academia, and other businesses, is essential for the success of CSR initiatives for women's empowerment. Partnerships can leverage resources, expertise, and networks to scale up interventions, share best practices, and drive systemic change. Robust measurement and evaluation frameworks are needed to assess the impact of CSR

activities on women's empowerment outcomes. This includes defining clear indicators, collecting gender-disaggregated data, and using appropriate methodologies to track progress, identify gaps, and inform decision-making. Transparency and accountability are key principles in CSR activities for women's empowerment. Companies should be transparent about their goals, activities, and outcomes related to women's empowerment and be accountable to stakeholders for their commitments and actions. SR initiatives for women's empowerment should be designed with a focus on long-term sustainability. This involves considering factors such as organizational capacity, community engagement, partnership building, and integration into broader development strategies to ensure lasting impact. Ethical considerations, including respect for human rights, dignity, and cultural sensitivity, should guide CSR activities for women's empowerment. Companies should avoid harm, prioritize the voices and agency of women, and uphold principles of fairness, equity, and social justice. In summary, women's empowerment in CSR activities requires a comprehensive and integrated approach that addresses the root causes of gender inequality, engages stakeholders, and promotes sustainable development outcomes for women and girls. By investing in women's empowerment, corporations can contribute to positive social change, economic growth, and inclusive prosperity.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview of the Research Problem

The research study revolves around women empowerment in the Indian Apparel Industry by taking note of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities. The research is denoted as an “impact analysis,” which throws light into the impact of CSR activities on women's motivation and mental well-being. At the global level, the textile industry is predominantly run by a female workforce. Statistically, the female workforce contribution is 70% in China, 85% in Bangladesh, and 90% in Cambodia (Rahman and Siddiqui 2015). The underlying reason behind such a number is the typical skill set for this job, which is mainly possessed by women. This shows that many opportunities lie within the textile industry in terms of women empowerment in comparison to other sectors.

In India, the textile sector holds the second position in terms of employment after the agricultural sector (Rahman and Siddiqui 2015). Despite this fact, the textile sector has not concentrated much on women's empowerment. CSR is one of the key segments of modern businesses, which can help strengthen the capabilities and qualities of women and show them the best direction to take forward their skills. Such activities are also not widely explored in the textile industry of the modern generation. Therefore, it has been crucial for the textile industry to work on this pressing issue. According to reports published by economists around the world, about 2.14 Cr women are recruited in the global textile industry, which accounts for 60% of the total workforce (Rahman and Siddiqui 2015). This shows that the Indian textile industry has the potential to recognize women's contribution and capitalize their strengths

without recruiting additional workers in the formal jobs. Several women have benefited from trade-related programs launched by the Government of India, with respect to the textile sector. Several unmarried women (the first woman being from Bangalore) have been inspired (by these programs) to learn trade and join various facilities of the textile sector. Such initiatives also reduced the knowledge and skill gaps of the new job aspirants.

In addition to the above issue, the Indian apparel actor also faced difficulties related to gender inequality as there is a noticeable difference between the two genders in terms of wages and opportunities (Rahman and Siddiqui 2015). As women hold less influential positions in the organization, their career growth is also limited and there is little diversity of thoughts during decision-making. Due to restricted access to educational opportunities, the development of skills is slower in women than their counterparts. CSR is an important tool that can provide permanent solutions to this problem. CSR initiatives can empower women and provide them the opportunities to design interventions and face the challenges.

In this context, the study suggests solutions for empowering women belonging to the textile sector through CSR initiatives. As the companies implement CSR strategies, they can achieve a healthy reputation in the market and provide better services to the customers. Indian companies can undertake CSR activities to emphasize on sustainability and social responsibility and create a distinguishing mark on the society and environment (Keane and Te Velde 2008). Surrounding these factors, the research methodology chapter is going to encapsulate few critical areas, that is, operationalization of theoretical constructs, research purpose or questions, research

design, sampling, data collection, data analysis, limitations of the research, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Operationalization of Theoretical Constructs

Every research methodology is initiated with the operationalization of theoretical constructs that shows the overall research philosophy or the paradigm controlling the main idea of the study. While formulating a research plan, first constructs a paradigm and finds out the possible directions for proceeding with the activities. Broadly, a research paradigm is categorized into two parts: positivism and interpretivism. Every research needs to employ a paradigm for carrying out the process legitimately and reasonably (Rehman and Alharthi 2016). According to the specific needs of the project and the experience or knowledge in dealing with the information, one paradigm is chosen, which further dictates the nature of research methodology.

Positivism believes that only one reality exists in the area of research and can be measured or understood using relevant techniques or quantitative metrics (Dixit and Lal 2019). Generally, quantitative methods are used under the positivism research paradigm. This is a concept by which the real inquiry on the selected subject or topic by referring to the data sources is conducted. Positivism mainly functions around ontology, which is a philosophical theory related to the nature of reality. Specifically, ontology deals with the most fundamental question, that is, “What is reality?” A rigorous approach is employed to study the phenomena of nature.

On the contrary, the interpretivism approach is mainly applied to social science subjects. This approach believes in the interpretation of the reality instead of relying on the observations of reality. According to the proponents of this theory, human behavior is a complex field to deal with; it can only be judged through comprehension

or interpretation of facts. As humans attach meanings to their behaviors, their responses can be noted and valuable insights can be collected from this data. This kind of philosophy is mainly associated with qualitative research where descriptive data or information is derived from the participants.

This research is going to abide by a positivism philosophy, which is assumed to provide reliable information and accurate results on the research problem (Dixit and Lal 2019). As this kind of philosophy supports quantitative research, such an approach is adopted. The research requires collection of first-hand data from the female workers of India belonging to the textile industry and examining the data to understand the opportunities and limitations of the female workers in this sector. The research will also take into account secondary information collection through survey questionnaires. Therefore, the results are published based on the data obtained from the participants.

The study will follow the positivism philosophy for this research as it predicts the situation accurately based on the statistical results obtained through software and also establishes relevant relationships between the social factors related with the research. This way the real values of the research problem is obtained and suitable solutions to the businesses and individuals are suggested (Kaushik and Walsh 2019). In this case, to understand the extent to which women have been deprived of opportunities and rights so that immediate actions can be taken to empower female workers and involve them in CSR activities.

3.3 Research Purpose and Questions

The primary aim of this research is to highlight the importance of women's empowerment in the Indian textile industry and the role of CSR in driving this

process. Specifically, the research sets few objectives, that is, analysis of current status of Indian female textile workers in terms of employment, representation and empowerment in the society, examination of the nature of CSR initiatives tied with women's empowerment, development of a framework that is going to measure the impact of CSR activities on women's empowerment and evaluating the effectiveness of current CSR policies in promoting women's empowerment in the apparel industry (Dhiman and Sharma 2017).

The matter is very significant in the current decade as women's empowerment can ultimately contribute to the growth and development of a nation and lead to diversification of thoughts and ideas. As women have access to contemporary developmental resources, their participation in the social, political and economic spheres is going to increase, which will result in GDP and per- capita income growth. Even in the political dimension, women's prominent participation in Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha came after several years of India's Independence, that is, in the year 1962. In this year, the participation rate increased to 46.63% followed by 58.60% in 1984 (Dhiman and Sharma 2017).

Even after years of great success and achievements, India has faced numerous challenges related to gender discrimination, female infanticide and foeticide. This is coupled with other significant challenges such as security and safety of women after several incidents of sexual harassment reported every year. Moreover, the nation has seen substantial progress regarding gender disparities. However, the issue still persists at a large scale. Moreover, the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2002 reveals a huge gap between men and women in the fields of primary or tertiary

education enrolment. Programs such as (Sarva Sikhsha Abhiyaan 2001) and (Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign 2015) have been launched for the girl children.

The questions addressed in this research are listed below:

- a) What is the current state of women's employment, empowerment and representation in the textile industry?
- b) What is the nature and extent of CSR initiatives taken for women's empowerment?
- c) What framework is effective for measuring the CSR impact on women's empowerment?
- d) How effective are the CSR policies or regulations in upholding women's empowerment in the apparel industry?

All the above questions signify the current condition of women in the apparel industry and necessary measures to be taken against these challenges.

3.4 Research Design

A research design reflects a framework constituting all the research methods or techniques chosen to conduct the study. The research design helps researchers sharpen their methods and make suitable plans for carrying out a systematic investigation of the study. A research topic decides whether the study will be experimental, survey, semi-experimental or review. A typical research design narrates all the steps taken in the research process, that is, formulation of aims and objectives, selection of a research design, identification of population or sampling method, selection of data collection method and finalization of data analysis strategy.

A small brief of the research design is provided in the research proposal, which aims to create an impact on the end readers regarding the utility of the study in the modern

environment. The research design should produce the slightest margin of error and easily view the end results as per the convenience (Myers et al. 2013). The essential elements of a research design include accurate purpose statement, techniques for data collection or analysis, research methodology, probable objections to the research, timeline, settings of the study, and measurable metrics for data analysis. Inclusion of all elements is highly needed in a research design.

The overall classification of research design shows two distinct types: qualitative and quantitative research. Depending on the aim of the research, mixed methodology is adopted that is, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research techniques. All the three techniques have their respective strengths and weaknesses. Among all, the mixed methodology shows the best results as it includes explanation of the situation at hand, backed by relevant data (Myers et al. 2013). Valid justifications for each of the interpretations is provided. Mixed methodology is widely used across a number of fields, starting from social science to scientific research studies.

Research design can further be broken down into five different parts, that is, descriptive, experimental, correlational, diagnostic and explanatory. In experimental research, a relationship is established between the cause and effect of a situation. In correlational research, a relationship is established between two closely connected variables (Taherdoost 2022). In diagnostic research, the underlying causes of a phenomenon are evaluated. Lastly, in explanatory research, the ideas and thoughts of a researcher are used to further delve into the subject.

This research adopts a quantitative approach following the positivism philosophy, which is aligned with the research objective. A quantitative approach is deemed suitable as it is going to generate the exact or accurate values regarding the opinions

of the respondents. In this case, the respondents are the female employees working in the Indian apparel industry, mainly belonging to the middle and top-level management (Taherdoost 2022). To understand their opinions about workplace empowerment and their experiences in being associated with the Indian textile industry, a quantitative approach is adopted. Additionally, secondary information will also be validated based on several instruments.

A pilot study will be conducted for this research, whereby a small-scale test of methods and procedures will be carried out so that it can be used on a larger scale. In any intervention process, pilot studies are very important to clear out several misconceptions regarding the situation in hand. In this pilot work, the hypotheses of the research will be tested using a small sample of the target population and then the same approach will be tested on a larger scale. Further, the collected data will be analyzed using suitable quantitative metrics and statistical software to derive the results.

Descriptive research design will be used in this study, which provides clear and precise knowledge about the phenomena so that a summary of data and information can be presented in a straightforward manner (Sundström et al. 2020). Among all other methods, descriptive research design is cost-effective and convenient. In this research design, the new research area is explored extensively and also generated hypotheses accordingly. The reasoning method used in this research is deductive reasoning. When this method is used, a particular pattern of research is found and a hypothesis is developed based on existing theoretical frameworks. Furthermore, a research strategy is designed to test the hypothesis and find out the key results.

Deductive reasoning transcends a research from a specific zone to a general area and

derives the causal relationship backed by a particular theory (Rezigalla 2020). The research then moves on to data collection, which is done through both primary and secondary methods. Primary data is collected through survey questionnaires, while secondary data is collected through published information on the websites.

3.5 Population and Sample

Population is defined as a complete set of people having similar characteristics, who are considered the most suitable group for the research. The individuals belonging to this population are either related with the research topic or they might provide useful information on the research issue. A sample is generally defined as a subset of the population, which represents the population in the best way, having all the desired characteristics (Turale 2020). As it is difficult to reach all the individuals in the population, a sample is taken for conducting data collection. In this case, about 300 plus samples will be taken from the different stakeholders and female employees of the apparel sector.

In a descriptive study, a researcher must define a study population and further make observations on the taken sample. Demographic characteristics of the population are taken into account while shortlisting subjects for the research. Demographic variables considered in this area are geographic location, age, sex, occupation, religion and ethnic background. Among these variables, geographical location is the most important one as it shows the administrative boundary of a population, either a district or a state (Turale 2020). Other demographic variables are obtained from census data

or voters' lists. The lifestyles or fundamental rituals of the selected participants are also investigated.

During the sampling process, sample size is a very important element as it determines the level of accuracy of the results. In order to improve the quality of results, the sample has to be a representative of the population and each member of the population is mutually exclusive. After determining the most feasible sample size, the method of sampling needs to be decided. The sampling methods commonly used in a research are random and non-random sampling, which shows the fair or unfair chance of being selected for a research.

Random sampling methods mainly constitute simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling, and cluster sampling (Berndt 2020). In a simple random sampling, every person has the equal chance of being selected in a random manner. In a systematic sampling, every n th person will be selected from an ordered list according to predefined criteria. In a stratified sampling, the study population is divided into multiple strata based on demographics and then one person is selected randomly from each stratum. In a cluster sampling method, populations are geographically dispersed and clusters are identified from all parts. Each person is randomly selected from these clusters.

Non-random sampling methods include convenience sampling, volunteer sampling, judgment sampling, quota sampling, and snowball sampling. In convenience sampling, the units are selected in an arbitrary manner without planning. In this case,

it is assumed that all units of the population are alike and are subjected to the biases. In volunteer sampling, volunteers are screened according to the survey purpose. As a result, the method is prone to high selection biases. Judgment sampling is done according to the composition and behavior of the population. Once the population is selected, the expert decides the part of the population to be sampled. Quota sampling refers to the selection of a specific number of units from various subpopulations, which satisfy the sample size objectives (Lakens 2022). In a snowball sampling, the respondents are contacted through other respondents and the ball keeps on rolling and getting bigger likewise. In this case, the chances of getting selected is uneven across the whole population.

In this case, the target population consists of various stakeholders of the apparel industry including female employees holding the position of top- and middle-level management. Other organizational members belonging to the senior management are also selected for the research.

The data related to women empowerment can be best obtained through female employees, who have been the integral parts of this journey (Lakens 2022). These respondents are mostly selected from the shortlisted firms of the Indian textile industry. The sample size for this research would be 300 plus as this is quantitative research. The data will be analyzed using statistical software and advanced tools for quantitative analysis.

In this research, a random sampling method will be carried out, that is, stratified random sampling, where the target samples will be divided according to their demographics and other details. One person will be selected randomly from each

stratum. In this case, the female workers will be divided based on their age, income levels, and geographical locations. At the same time, the male workers will also be divided based on their age, income levels, and geographical locations. Female and male workers will be chosen differently at different points of time. The data collected from them will be analyzed separately. Stratified random sampling is justified for this research. This is because this sampling involves no biases in the process; everyone will have a fair chance of being selected for the data collection process. At the same time, there will be a logical order to the selection process as the participants are positioned across strata.

3.6 Participant Selection

In every research, it is essential to use fair and equitable recruitment practices in order to avoid risk or coercion or undue influence. Selection criteria should be fair and in accordance with the research question. To test the equitability and fairness of the selection process, the institution takes into account three crucial factors, that is, scientific design, risk susceptibility and likelihood of benefit. Before heading into the research, complete information should be shared with the participants as well as the research authority. This information includes the purpose of the research, research setting, inclusion/exclusion criteria, vulnerability to coercion or undue influence, amount or timing of payments and enrollment procedures.

To determine the underlying risks of the participants, the institutions evaluate the number of participants expected to be enrolled for data collection and analysis. Any change in the actual number of enrolled participants shows a discrepancy or a deviation from the approved protocol. The characteristics of the target population

must be in line with the research problem (Lakens 2022). This is going to ensure a fair distribution of risks and benefits of research.

During selection of participants, few considerations must be taken. These include equitable selection of participants for seeking appropriate answers to the research questions, fair distribution of anticipated research benefits, distribution of research burdens, and justification of involvement of the participants who might be susceptible to pressure. The selection process must take into account even the vulnerable population, so that equal opportunities are given to them. No person should be included for non-scientific reasons (Lakens 2022). This is because a research study in itself is an expensive process and inclusion of additional people might increase costs unnecessarily. However, this rule is not applicable for minority communities; they must always be included in the research if deemed suitable.

Any group of people who might be susceptible to risks should be excluded from the research. Procedures for identifying these individuals must be put in place appropriately. A fair selection criteria must be implemented but the recruitment methods might lead to inequitable participant selection. In cases when participants are susceptible to pressures, mechanisms must be adopted to minimize the negative effects (Lakens 2022). Other important factors to be considered in this process are the amount of payments to the participants, mode of payment, and timing of payment disbursement following the guidelines of the higher authority.

In this research study, stratified random sampling method has been used to select participants for data collection. The women workers and other stakeholders have been stratified using definite criteria, such as, demography and location (Lakens 2022). During the selection process, The participants who are susceptible to pressures are

identified separately and measures are taken for reducing the impact of these pressures. During participant selection, the protocols related to vulnerable participants have been followed and additional safeguards have been put in place wherever needed.

An order preference has been maintained while selecting the class of participants. Competent personnel are chosen over incompetent personnel as per their office records. No biases have occurred in the process as it is a random sampling method (Lakens 2022).

In very few cases, convenience sampling is used for selective groups, such as students, employees, or educationally disadvantaged sections. This is because there might be chances of non-selection of these people in a random method. Researchers are also not allowed to generalize the results beyond the research population.

University students are considered one group of the vulnerable population and they might be a part of any research when it is included in the course.

During participant selection, ethical principles have been abided by and the participants are free to withdraw themselves from the data collection process as per their will. They will not be imposed any penalty for such withdrawal (Lakens 2022).

Complete information will be shared with these individuals before the initiation of the data collection process and it depends on them whether they want to be a part of this study. Recruitment methods, locations and timelines must be checked thoroughly at regular intervals so that they are in line with the research objectives and desired results are obtained.

3.7 Instrumentation

A research instrument is defined as a tool for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data according to the nature of research. These research instruments are used across a wide range of fields, that is, health sciences, social sciences, and education in order to obtain valuable insights from students, teachers, or other clients.

A research instrument is intrinsically bound with a research methodology (Taherdoost 2021). Before selecting an appropriate research instrument, few systematic steps are carried out. These are selection of a topic, formulation of thesis statement, selection of a suitable type of analyses, writing a literature review and research questions, and conceptualization of a topic.

An effective research instrument must have the fundamental attributes in order to generate the best results for the study. The research instrument must be valid and reliable so that the results obtained are practical and realistic (Taherdoost 2021). The research instrument should be able to connect all the variables together and align the research with the conceptual framework. The instrument should produce data that is relevant in the current time or the period of study and can be linked with the research questions. Looking at the collected data should allow for testing hypotheses and answering questions accurately.

The research instruments must be free of bias and must be appropriate for the background of the study and the culture or ethnic diversity of the research participants. The research should be completely aware of the instructions given regarding the proper use of the instrument. In this research, only the primary method will be used for collecting data and completing the research. In this study, the research instrument used is a survey questionnaire. Survey is a type of instrument used in

quantitative research, whereby only objective-type responses are collected from participants (Taherdoost 2021). A large number of people can participate in a survey at one time.

Likert scale-based questionnaires will be used in the survey, which measures opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of the participants. In this design, a central statement is constructed at the top followed by a series of options. The respondents choose the option that accurately shows their feelings towards the corresponding research question. Likert scales show the level of agreement or disagreement between the participants (Baldwin et al. 2022). They determine the extent to which the topic is more or less nuanced among the participants. The participants can either agree or disagree or may choose to remain neutral. These scales are mostly used in marketing, psychology, and other social sciences.

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection encompasses a set of processes that are carried out for gathering and measuring information on the research variables. The processes must occur in an established systematic manner so that the research questions are answered, hypotheses are tested, and outcomes are evaluated. Various sources are referred to while collecting data for the research. The sources must be credible, authentic, and reliable and must help find answers to research problems and trends. By examining this data, trends can be forecasted and decisions made accordingly. Especially, in the healthcare segment, the data is used to learn more about a patient's history.

In a typical data collection process, data types, sources, and relevant methods are identified to generate better insights on the topic. In research, commercial and

government research works, data collection has a huge demand. Before beginning the data collection process, it's essential to determine the actual goal or purpose of the research, the kind of data required for the study, and the methods and procedures for collecting, storing, and processing the information (Taherdoost 2021). The two broad approaches to data collection are primary and secondary data collection. In a primary data collection process, original data is directly extracted from the source, either through direct interaction or through video conferencing. Through primary data collection, first-hand information is generated from the participant and matched with the ultimate research objective. Primary data collection is carried out using other sub-modes, such as, interviews, observations, experiments, and focus groups. Survey and questionnaire sessions can be conducted either through face-to-face interviews or through other online and offline platforms. Another mode of data collection is the secondary method by which existing data collected by another person is used for his own research purpose. The existing researchers may use this data for a different purpose and analyze it for extracting relevant information. Generally, secondary data is collected through published sources such as online databases, government or institutional records, publicly available data, and past research study (Taherdoost 2021). Ensuring accurate data collection methods can help preserve the integrity of the research and prevent unnecessary errors. If the right tool is applied, errors are less likely to occur in the process.

In this research study, a quantitative approach is applied. Hence, survey questionnaires are used for data collection. This is a primary mode of data collection whereby first-hand information from the research participants will be obtained. However, the secondary mode of data collection will also be applied in this research,

whereby data will be collected from published information related to the topic.

Through the primary mode, information related to the personal experiences of women workers and other stakeholders on women empowerment and gender discrimination in the Indian textile industry will be fetched.

Through secondary data, various financial reports, company details, strategic reports, and other published information are examined to find evidence of women empowerment initiatives taken by the shortlisted companies (Taherdoost 2021). These reports will also show the level of engagement of women workers in the workplace and their achievements. The appreciation given by these firms to women workers for their contribution to the business will be investigated. At the same time, any kind of gender biases will be looked at, either related to salaries, opportunities or other benefits. Accordingly, experiences of the participants will be interpreted.

In the survey, the participants are asked questions on women empowerment, women professional rights, and CSR activities conducted by their firms at the present state.

The participants also discussed any kind of incident related to gender biases that they have faced or seen in the workplace (Taherdoost 2021). In the pilot study, few sample questions are disseminated to the candidates. These include questions on the important variables of the research such as women empowerment in the textile industry and importance of CSR in the long-term development of women workers.

Based on the answers from the pilot study, the decision has been made to proceed with the study.

Applying this data collection procedure has enabled the collection of extensive data and information on the selected topic, allowing for a more vivid and prominent exploration of the research problem. This data collection process has been quite useful

in getting the exact responses from the participants without any biases in the process. Both subjective and objective information has been collected for the research so that proper interpretation can be linked with the generated figures and statistical numbers. The information has also been useful in showing a direction to the research and pointing out its future scope.

3.9 Data Analysis

In research, data analysis is the process of using statistical or descriptive techniques for illustrating, recapitulating, and evaluating the newly collected data. Various procedures of data analysis are applied to draw inductive inferences from data and distinguish the actual, refined information from raw data. In qualitative research, thematic data analysis is used widely across all research fields. In a thematic data analysis, common trends and patterns are found across the datasets; the data is then arranged according to these themes (Baldwin et al. 2022). Meaningful information is then extracted from each theme and each statement is backed by evidence or theoretical frameworks.

Data analysis requires necessary skills to undergo an elaborate training and upskilling session to demonstrate the best practices. Any kind of unintentional misconduct might damage the entire research process and furnish misleading results (Baldwin et al. 2022). Adequate training is required for proper designing, implementation and evaluation of the data analysis process. In quantitative research, statistical techniques are applied to present the data either in a pictorial or graphical form. In scientific or business disciplines, data analysis becomes a crucial process as it shows the actual

figures or numbers and quantifies the information into data. It is important to publish unbiased data after analysis.

Considerations taken during data analysis are having necessary skills for the work, selection of data collection methods and relevant analyses techniques, drawing unbiased inference, following acceptable norms for discipline, determining statistical significance, drawing unbiased inferences, determining statistical significance, providing honest and accurate analysis, considering environmental or contextual issues, partitioning text for analyzing qualitative data, understanding the reliability and validity of the method, training staff on the entire data analysis process, and having knowledge of data presentation (Baldwin et al. 2022). A number of past studies suggest that a proper planning is required before the initiation of the data analysis process.

In a quantitative data analysis process, numerical data is interpreted to make sense of it and relationships between variables are found through mathematical calculations or statistical tests. In this process, spreadsheets of individual data points are turned into meaningful insights so that informed decisions can be taken. In an experiment or survey, columns of numbers are turned into useful insights so that it can derive the most feasible result and suggest quick solutions to the research problem (Baldwin et al. 2022). While making final decisions, complete, unbiased information must be taken and measured with the right tools and metrics.

In this research, data analysis will be performed through statistical methods with the help of IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

SPSS software is used in systematic steps, starting from preparation of data sets to evaluation of analysis or interpretation. It is important to define the research question

and hypothesis beforehand so that data sets can be designed accordingly (Baldwin et al. 2022). It is important to keep the research question short, crisp, and specific so that the direction of research is clear. After this step, surveys, experiments and observations need to collect data and prepare the ultimate data sets. The data should be clean, accurate, and consistent, adhering to the principles and conventions of SPSS so that it can be read and processed by the software.

Depending on the nature of the research question, the most appropriate analysis method is chosen and run. SPSS covers a wide range of statistical methods, such as, descriptive or inferential statistics, correlation, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), regression, and t-test. Before data is fed into the software the type, level and distribution of data is noted. After selection of the analysis method, the software is run and output is checked (Baldwin et al. 2022). Menus, dialog boxes, and syntax editors are used during SPSS analysis. Tables, charts, graphs or reports can be customized according to individual requirements. If needed, the research may also look at other relevant statistics, such as, means, standard deviation or p-values.

Finally, output is checked and results or findings are reported accordingly.

Amendments are made as per the final output or the progress of the activities.

Following the standards of the field of study, the results will be published. Tables or figures are used for summarizing the findings using appropriate terminologies. The results or findings are related to the research question and hypothesis. As hypothesis testing is also done during this phase, the approval or rejection of hypothesis is also explained in this section. The t-test is used for testing this hypothesis and validating the statement.

The information collected through secondary sources is analyzed separately using relevant themes or patterns. Data obtained from these sources are analyzed through quantitative techniques like mean, standard deviation, or regression analysis (Baldwin et al. 2022). After the results are obtained, the strengths and limitations are reflected upon by considering three parameters: validity, reliability and generalizability. Any potential sources of bias or error is acknowledged and strategies are employed to minimize or control these obstacles.

3.10 Research Design Limitations

Limitations are inevitable in any kind of research and it is normal to find out these weaknesses so that they can be taken care of in the future. An honest research study is preferred more by the end readers than a covert research study. These limitations affect research findings and may alter the final results. **Sample size** - This is a very important criteria in a research. It is very essential to select an optimal sample size to identify significant relationships between the variables.

By basing the study on a larger sample size, the accuracy of the results is determined. In this case, the sample size is not optimal, it is slightly on the higher side (Akanle et al. 2020). As this is quantitative research, every participant matters and the importance of sample size is higher than that of qualitative research. The sample size can be cut down a little to obtain better quality results.

- a) **Lack of previous studies on the selected topic** - Literature review is an integral part of any research and is used as a foundation for building upon his research objectives. When there is a lack of past studies on the selected topic, the present research becomes invaluable for the industry. Several assumptions

are made and results are calculated based on the factors or variables as deemed relevant by him. The present research becomes a novel study and therefore, The study focuses on the contemporary or evolving research problem.

- b) **Scope of discussion** - This limitation is related to the previous one, as there is limited experience in handling the research topic and producing academic papers. Such a phenomenon decreases the scope and level of discussion and has to compromise on several factors (Akanle et al. 2020). Being a novel research, this study might not be applicable in every part of the world and there might not be much scope for further discussion on a particular portion of the research.
- c) **Limited access to information** - This is another important limitation of this research. As the research is confined only to the Indian economy, there have been problems in getting the permission of the concerned authorities while interviewing personnel of selected companies. Due to these issues, few companies had to be rejected from the list, which could have provided better information on the topic. The quality of the result has been affected due to this issue.
- d) **Time constraint** - This is a common limitation in any research, which negatively affects the data collection process and hinders the flow of the research. In this case, due to time constraints, insufficient data on the topic was collected, and the survey process had to be shortened, resulting in only limited information being extracted from the participants (Akanle et al. 2020). To minimize time constraints, best practices were acknowledged to solve the

research problem within the stipulated time. Critical situations and conflicts were also avoided to ensure the publication of accurate, timely results.

- e) **Impact limitations** - Despite having excellent statistical results and a strong design, a research may suffer for being population specific and having a strong regional focus. In this case, the study connects only the Indian women workers, who have been sufferers of gender discrimination. Though the problem strongly persists in emerging economies, other countries have not been taken into account for this research. As a result, the complete picture is still not clear, whether women empowerment is likely to increase due to corporate social responsibility. Moreover, the extent of gender discrimination seen across other industries have also not been explicitly investigated.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical norms are necessary at every phase of life, either at home, school, church or other social settings. Many people acquire the sense of right deeds and misdeeds from a very early age, while others may or may not get it throughout life. Ethical standards govern and control research studies across a wide range of fields, that is, medicine, law, business and engineering. Ethical norms help people apply innovative approaches without violating the protocols (Baig et al. 2020). Several reasons are discussed to narrate the implications of ethical norms in a research. Any prohibition of ethical norms may lead to errors within the research process.

- a) **Safety** - In many research works, the subjects are highly prone to potential risks. These might be physical risks, psychological risks, social/economic risks, or legal risks. Physical risks include pain, injury or physical illness,

which might result from noise, heat, cold or other factors. It is important to think about these factors while designing the data collection setup.

Psychological risks occur due to negative mental conditions, such as anxiety or depression (Baig et al. 2020). Social or economic risks include loss of respect for others, exercising power over others and damage to a subject's employability. Ensuring safety relates to eradication of all these risky elements from the research.

- b) **Privacy** - Privacy relates to protection of private communications that have occurred through papers or grants submitted for publication, personnel records, military secrets, and patient information. At the same time, it is the duty to uphold the privacy of the research participants by ensuring the non-disclosure of their personal records. Privacy works hand-in-hand with anonymity, whereby the person's name is not revealed to other interviewees. This is important in a research, so that the participants can freely share their responses without facing any aftereffect. Without going into any office politics, the participants can confess an honest answer.
- c) **Scientific validity or rigor** - This is another ethical consideration, through which he proves that the study is scientifically valid and can produce faces, reproducible observations or information in relation to the research questions. Scientific validity shows that a sound methodology has been applied to perform the research and a protocol has been abided by throughout the research, which will lead to reliable inferences (Head 2020). Validity is mostly applicable in qualitative research as it is based on subjective interpretation of

the results instead of measurements and numbers. Use of proper scientific tools is recommended to maintain scientific rigor of the study.

- d) **Voluntary participation** - All the research participants are free to choose whether they want to participate irrespective of any pressure or coercion. They can withdraw from the study any time as per their will without providing any justification or explanation. All the participants must be given the assurance that there is no negative consequence for being a part of the research and they are not going to face any repercussions for their refusal. The research respects the decision of every individual and does not want to change their minds.
- e) **Plagiarism** - The research work should be free from plagiarism, that is, copying others work, which might violate the copyright rules. If a researcher submits others' works as his own, he gives himself the credit for carrying out the research and publishing the information (Head 2020). However, it might not be his novel research and if he does not give proper credit to the actual person, it is referred to as stealing. Self-plagiarism is another kind of ethical issue, which occurs when a person republishes or re-submits parts of his own work without citing the original research. These problems must be taken care of in research.
- f) **Informed consent** - This refers to a situation when all the potential participants receive complete information on the research project and understand the underlying reasons behind the conduction of the research (Husband 2020). They are already aware of the future benefits, risks, funding, institutional approval and other necessary information about the project. If the research participants have any question regarding the actual motive of the

research, they may put it forward. After they agree to participate, they are given a consent form to sign and mutually proceed with the research. If the respondents have low literacy, things must be explained to them verbally.

3.12 Conclusion

The methodology section has covered the fundamental steps taken for carrying out the research. The key sections covered here are overview of the research problem, operationalization of theoretical constructs, research purpose and questions, research design, population and sample, participant selection, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis, research limitations, and ethical considerations. The research deals with women empowerment in the apparel industry and the impact of CSR on this area. In India, the textile sector employs maximum female employees and also focuses on corporate social responsibility as a major part of their business. The research has abided by the positivism philosophy.

The significance of this matter is believed to be paramount in the present generation, as it contributes to the nation's growth and development and strengthens its activities in social, economic, and political spheres. The research questions revolve around the present state of women employment, empowerment and representation in the Indian textile industry, CSR initiatives taken for women's empowerment, and CSR policies or regulations concerning women's empowerment in the Indian textile industry. To find answers to these research questions, a quantitative methodology is adopted along with primary and secondary data collection. A descriptive research design is chosen. The target population consists of all the stakeholders of selected textile organizations in India along with women workers. About 300 plus samples are collected from the

population on the basis of demographic and geographic factors. Following this, stratified random sampling is applied for taking out the samples. The research instrument used for this study is survey questionnaire, which helps generate objective results so that they can be converted to figures or numbers for proper analysis. Data analysis is carried out through SPSS software, which is a statistical package consisting of all sorts of statistical tools, such as, regression, correlation, t-test and other similar kinds.

Some of the key limitations of the research have been inappropriate sample size, lack of previous studies on the same topic, limited access to information, scope of discussion on the chosen research topic, time constraint, and impact limitations. All these inhibitors have affected the quality of the results. However, the research has taken steps towards minimizing their impacts. The ethical considerations of the research have been anonymity, privacy, validity, informed consent and reliability of the research.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The findings of the research undertaken to analyze and understand the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility activities on the process of women's empowerment within the Indian apparel industry are highlighted in this chapter. CSR has emerged as a clear tool for promoting gender equality and the advancement of women in social, economic, and professional standing. In the context of the Indian apparel industry, with a high participation of women in the workforce, CSR activities could make a difference by fostering diversity in the workplace, opening up routes to leadership, and eliminating the obstacles that have prevented professional female talent from developing. This study investigates how CSR policies and practices have been effective in contributing to achieving women's empowerment in the apparel sector. In specific, the main elements of objectives included the trend of employment and representation of women, the dimension and coverage under CSR activities for the woman, and developing a framework to measure outcomes of these activities. The paper also aimed at analyzing the efficiency of policies and regulations of the existing CSR in order to promote gender equality and address issues such as discrimination at workplaces, unequal pay, and low percentage in top positions.

In order to achieve these objectives, a quantitative research design was employed, based on a survey of 300 respondents from female employees, managers, and CSR practitioners in the apparel industry. These questionnaires were prepared with the aim of establishing how participants perceive gender equality, promotional opportunities in one's career, leadership involvement, and the effectiveness of CSR initiatives

through questions using a Likert scale. Analytical procedures used in this study involved descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, factor analysis, and regression analysis.

This chapter presents the findings using systematic presentation of data to answer each research objective. First, a look into the status of women's representation in the apparel industry is examined by descriptive statistics to examine employment practices, career growth opportunities, and leadership roles. In summary, the analysis showed that gender equality in the sector was moderate, and that respondents largely agreed that women have access to career advancement and leadership positions despite challenges.

The subsequent section of the series now proceeds to examine the nature and extent of CSR activities related to women's empowerment. The key dimensions, through factor analysis, have been identified to include education, skill development, and workplace inclusivity. The findings suggest that while CSR activities are perceived to have a positive impact, variability exists at the level of implementation and perception across different areas of industry.

Finally, this chapter highlights a framework for measuring the impact of CSR activities on women's empowerment using a regression analysis. Such analysis highlights the most important determinants of CSR effectiveness in terms of the extent of CSR activities and their impact on women's professional development.

Results suggest that while CSR policies have contributed to progress toward empowering women, improvements are still to be made, especially in transparency, accountability, and measurement of CSR outcomes. Hence, this chapter undertakes a detailed scrutiny of the collected data as an attempt to fill the prevailing gap in the

literature on the current status of women's empowerment in the apparel industry and exactly how CSR would foster gender equality. The findings presented here have underpinned not only both the successes and limitations of CSR initiatives taken so far but also provided backing for devising effective strategies for women's empowerment in the sector.

4.2 Organization of Data Analysis

The process and mechanism of organizing and analyzing the data collected for the study in order for the findings to be in line with the research objectives are described in this section. The analysis is organized into three major phases: descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and regression analysis. Each of the phases addresses specific research questions concerning the current status regarding women's empowerment in the Indian apparel industry, the nature and extent of CSR initiatives, and how effective the CSR policies and regulations are in pushing forward the issues related to women's empowerment.

4.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

The first step in the analysis involved descriptive statistics, which were used to summarize the general trends and perceptions of the respondents regarding various aspects of gender equality and CSR initiatives. This approach provides an initial understanding of the current status of women's empowerment in the Indian apparel industry by examining key variables such as employment practices, career growth opportunities, leadership representation, and workplace inclusivity.

The data was collected from 300 participants, including both men and women working in the apparel sector. The survey included Likert scale-based questions with

responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The descriptive statistics revealed the following key findings:

- **Gender Equality in Employment Practices:** The statement “The current employment practices in the Indian apparel industry promote gender equality” had a mean score of 3.33 with a standard deviation of 1.24, suggesting a moderate level of agreement among the respondents. This indicates that while some progress has been made in promoting gender equality, there is still room for improvement.
- **Career Growth Opportunities for Women:** The mean score for the statement “Women in the apparel industry have equal opportunities for career growth compared to male employees” was 3.26 (SD = 1.22), reflecting a general perception of moderate equality in career advancement. However, the relatively high standard deviation suggests that experiences and perceptions of career growth opportunities vary significantly among respondents.
- **Leadership Representation:** Women’s representation in leadership positions scored a mean of 3.44 (SD = 1.23), indicating that although women are present in leadership roles, they may still be underrepresented. This finding is crucial for understanding the barriers to women’s advancement in the apparel industry.
- **CSR Initiatives Impact:** The descriptive statistics also provided insights into the effectiveness of CSR initiatives aimed at women’s empowerment. The mean score for the statement “CSR activities contribute to creating a supportive and inclusive work environment for women” was 3.34 (SD = 1.18),

suggesting that CSR initiatives are perceived to have a positive, though moderate, impact on workplace inclusivity.

Table 1 : Age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 21-30 years	79	26.3	26.3	26.3
31-40 years	65	21.7	21.7	48.0
41-50 years	47	15.7	15.7	63.7
51-60 years	62	20.7	20.7	84.3
60 and above	47	15.7	15.7	100.0
Total	300	100	100	

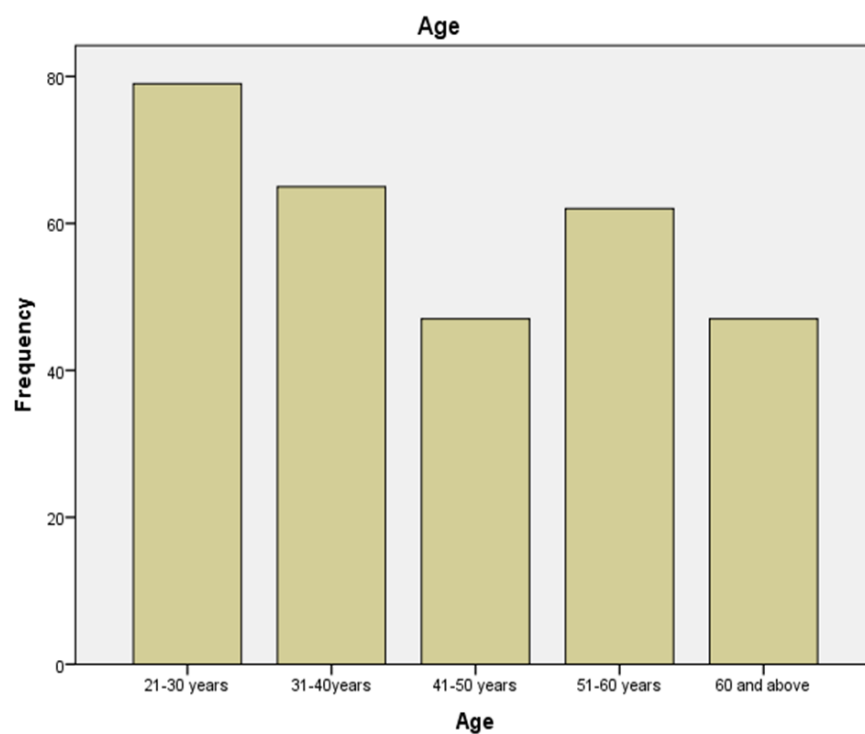


Figure 1: Age Bar graph

The table on Age provides a snapshot of the workforce demographics in the apparel industry, which is quite representative of each age group. Indeed, the 21-30 years cohort is the largest at 26.3 percent, showing that this workforce is young since nearly half the workforce is below 40 years. This might be an indication of the innovativeness and adaptability for which younger employees are known. The strong presence of the 51-60 years group, making up about 20.7%, shows that there is a strong contingent of working professionals who can provide stability and, I believe, possibly provide mentorship. Overall, diversity in these age brackets makes the workforce highly dynamic, blending youthful energy and seasoned expertise together. This would mean effective CSR initiatives across these different needs for maximum impact.

Table 2 : Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	109	36.3	36.3	36.3
Female	106	35.3	35.3	71.7
None Binary	56	18.7	18.7	90.3
Prefer not disclose	29	9.7	9.7	100.0
Total	300	100	100	

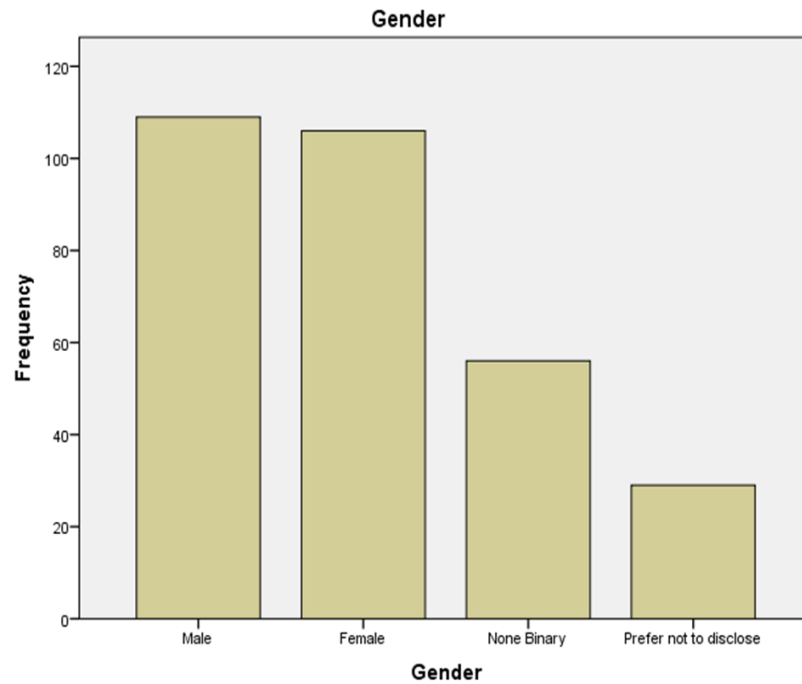


Figure 2: Gender Bar graph

In the table 'Gender', the workforce seems balanced, with near-equal representations of males at 36.3% and females at 35.3%, while non-binary stands at 18.7%, reflecting diversity. Besides that, 9.7% preferred not to tell their gender, representing the importance of inclusivity and privacy in workplace policies. Such diversity needs to be embraced by the CSR initiatives and, in turn, addressed effectively.

Table 3 : Marital Status

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Married	119	39.7	39.7	39.7
Unmarried	130	43.	43.3	83.0
Divorced	51	17.0	17.0	100.0
Total	300	100	100	

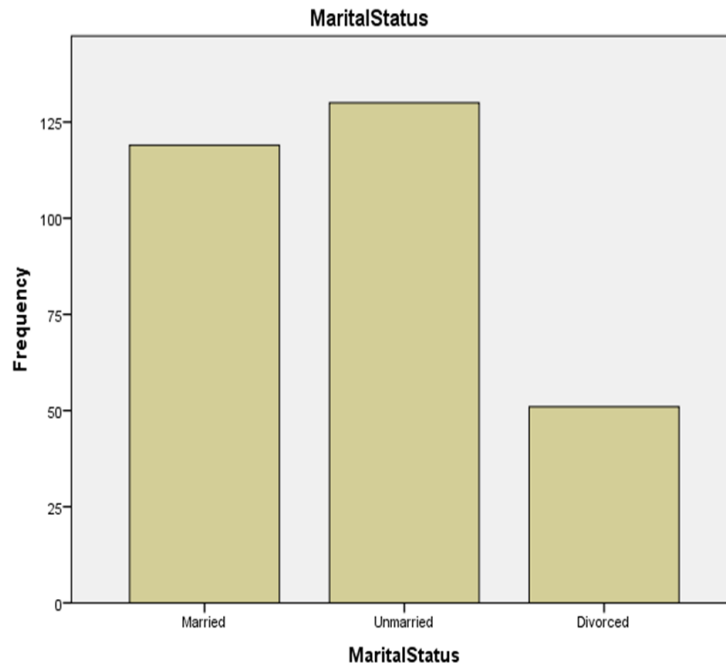


Figure 3: Marital status bar graph

What is outstanding in the marital status table is the variation within this particular workforce, with 43.3% being unmarried, 39.7% married, and 17% divorced. There are multiple personal life stages here, and hence workplace policies need to consider all possibilities for flexibility and inclusiveness. For single employees, opportunities for professional growth and career development programs will be valuable. Married employees would therefore view family-friendly initiatives such as childcare support or flexible working hours as much more important. Some of the employees may be divorced and could be in need of financial aid programs or support for emotional well-being. The CSR policies that heed such diversity in their stipulation could provide better inclusion and care, while employees also become satisfied and productive.

4.2.2 Factor Analysis

To delve deeper into the underlying dimensions of CSR activities directed toward women's empowerment, a factor analysis was conducted. Factor analysis is a statistical technique used to identify clusters or groups of related variables that represent underlying patterns in the data. This approach helps to reduce the complexity of the data by summarizing it into key factors that explain the variance in respondents' perceptions.

Table 4 : KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.905
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4629.874
	df	435
	Sig.	.000

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy for this study was 0.905, indicating that the data was well-suited for factor analysis. Additionally, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p < 0.001$), confirming that the correlations between variables were strong enough to justify factor analysis.

Table 5 : Communalities

No.		Initial	Extraction
1.	The current employment practices in the Indian apparel industry promote gender quality	1.000	.709
2.	Women in the apparel industry have equal opportunities for career growth compared to male employees	1.000	.560
3.	The apparel industry in India is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace	1.000	.417

4.	4. Apparel companies in India are transparent in terms of reporting gender	1.000	.555
5.	5. Women are represented in leadership positions within the apparel industry in India.	1.000	.690
6.	6. Women in the apparel industry participate in decision	1.000	.572
	The strategies adopted in the apparel industry to increase women's representation in key roles are effective.	1.000	.504
7.	7. Women in the apparel industry have equal opportunities to get promoted to leadership roles.	1.000	.501
8.	8. Women are empowered to voice their opinions and contribute to developing company policies in the apparel industry.	1.000	.510
9.	9. The apparel industry handles the issues of workplace harassment and discrimination that affect women's empowerment effectively.	1.000	.531
10.	10. The initiatives taken in the apparel industry to provide a supportive environment for women's professional growth are effective.	1.000	.696
11.	11. The apparel companies in India actively promote a culture that empowers women.	1.000	.591
12.	12. CSR activities contribute to creating a supportive and inclusive work environment for women in the apparel industry.	1.000	.600
13.	13. CSR activities in the apparel industry address the educational and skill development needs of women.	1.000	.586

14.	14. CSR activities in the apparel industry contribute to creating a supportive and inclusive environment for women.	1.000	.674
15.	15. CSR initiatives are effective in addressing the health and wellbeing issues particular to women.	1.000	.551
16.	16. The current CSR initiatives effectively address the needs and challenges faced by women in the apparel industry.	1.000	.595
17.	17. CSR programs in industry contribute to the financial and economic development of women.	1.000	.620
18.	18. The apparel industry is transparent in terms of reporting the impact of its CSR initiatives in empowering women.	1.000	.601
19.	19. CSR programs within the sector contribute to breaking the barriers responsible for hindering women's participation in the workforce.	1.000	.755
20.	20. Existing CSR policies and regulations contribute to advancing women's empowerment within the apparel sector.	1.000	.690
21.	21. CSR activities provide equal opportunities to women in employment and career growth.	1.000	.533
22.	22. Existing CSR policies are effective in addressing gender	1.000	.685
23.	23. CSR policies are effective in closing the gender	1.000	.725
24.	24. Current CSR policies are effectively targeting women in training and skill development.	1.000	.729

25.	25. The industry needs to enhance the clarity and specificity of performance indicators related to women's empowerment in CSR reporting	1.000	.649
26.	26. There is a need for standardized benchmarks to assess the success of CSR programs in promoting women's empowerment.	1.000	.721
27.	27. There is a need for more collaborative work among industry stakeholders to improve the measurement of how CSR activities are impacting women's empowerment.	1.000	.485
28.	29. The industry needs to incorporate digital technologies for effective measurement of how CSR activities are influencing women's empowerment.	1.000	.740
29.	30. Sector-wide forums and knowledge-sharing platforms would improve the collective understanding and measurement of the impact of CSR on women's empowerment.	1.000	.707
30.	7. Women in the apparel industry have equal opportunities to get promoted to leadership roles.	1.000	.501

In the Communities table, it is possible to form an idea about how much each variable accounted for factors derived through the analysis. It gives insight into the critical thematic areas on which women's empowerment can rely with confidence in order to ensure CSR effectiveness. High communality for breaking workforce barrier, underlines their prime importance to drive effective initiatives. Variables such as skill development and standardized bench marking coming as high as 0.729 and 0.721 resp-endarily underline the need for consistent training programs and their evaluation

frameworks. The fact of gender equality practices at 0.709 and leadership representation at 0.690 shows inclusive growth of the profession. The communalities related to diversity are much lower, reaching a low of 0.417, indicating gaps and pointing to areas where much more CSR emphasis is required.

Table 6 : Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigen Values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	10.377	34.590	34.590	10.377	34.590	34.590	10.377	34.590	34.590
2	2.410	8.032	42.623	2.410	8.032	42.623	2.410	8.032	42.623
3	1.942	6.472	49.095	1.942	6.472	49.095	1.942	6.472	49.095
4	1.421	4.738	53.832	1.421	4.738	53.832	1.421	4.738	53.832
5	1.219	4.064	57.896	1.219	4.064	57.896	1.219	4.064	57.896
6	1.114	3.714	61.610	1.114	3.714	61.610	1.114	3.714	61.610
7	.940	3.133	64.743	.940	3.133	64.743	.940	3.133	64.743
8	.823	2.742	67.485	.823	2.742	67.485	.823	2.742	67.485
9	.803	2.677	70.162	.803	2.677	70.162	.803	2.677	70.162

10	.779	2.5 97	72.7 58	.779	2.59 7	72.7 58	.779	2.59 7	72.7 58
11	.706	2.3 52	75.1 10	.706	2.35 2	75.1 10	.706	2.35 2	75.1 10
12	.676	2.2 52	77.3 62	.676	2.25 2	77.3 62	.676	2.25 2	77.3 62
13	.663	2.2 11	79.5 73	.663	2.21 1	79.5 73	.663	2.21 1	79.5 73
14	.590	1.9 67	81.5 40	.590	1.96 7	81.5 40	.590	1.96 7	81.5 40
15	.544	1.8 13	83.3 53	.544	1.81 3	83.3 53	.544	1.81 3	83.3 53
16	.540	1.8 02	85.1 54	.540	1.80 2	85.1 54	.540	1.80 2	85.1 54
17	.499	1.6 64	86.8 18	.499	1.66 4	86.8 18	.499	1.66 4	86.8 18
18	.476	1.5 86	88.4 05	.476	1.58 6	88.4 05	.476	1.58 6	88.4 05
19	.469	1.5 65	89.9 69	.469	1.56 5	89.9 69	.469	1.56 5	89.9 69
20	.375	1.2 50	91.2 20	.375	1.25 0	91.2 20	.375	1.25 0	91.2 20
21	.375	1.2 49	92.4 69	.375	1.24 9	92.4 69	.375	1.24 9	92.4 69
22	.338	1.1 28	93.5 97	.338	1.12 8	93.5 97	.338	1.12 8	93.5 97
23	.330	1.1 01	94.6 98	.330	1.10 1	94.6 98	.330	1.10 1	94.6 98
24	.315	1.0 50	95.7 48	.315	1.05 0	95.7 48	.315	1.05 0	95.7 48
25	.287	.95 6	96.7 04	.287	.956	96.7 04	.287	.956	96.7 04

26	.250	.833	97.537	.250	.833	97.537	.250	.833	97.537
27	.238	.792	98.329	.238	.792	98.329	.238	.792	98.329
28	.196	.653	98.982	.196	.653	98.982	.196	.653	98.982
29	.170	.568	99.550	.170	.568	99.550	.170	.568	99.550
30	.135	.450	100.000	.135	.450	100.000	.135	.450	100.000

Extraction Method : Principal Component Analysis

In the Total Variance Explained table, the Initial Eigenvalues indicate the amount of variance in the original variables accounted for by each component. The first component explains 34.590% of the variance, while the second explains 8.032%.

Together, the first six components explain 61.610% of the variance. The Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings reflect the variance explained by the extracted factors, showing that the first six factors together explain about 61.610% of the total variance in the data. After rotation, the variance explained by each factor is redistributed to achieve a more interpretable structure. The first factor now explains 17.469% of the variance, the second 13.229%, and so on, making the factors easier to interpret while maintaining the cumulative variance explained by the model.

Overall, the factor analysis has identified six primary factors that together explain about 61.6% of the variance in CSR initiatives aimed at women's empowerment. The high KMO value and significant Bartlett's test indicate that the data is suitable for this analysis. The communalities suggest that most variables are well-represented by the extracted factors. The rotated factor loadings indicate that these factors are distinct

and interpretable, meaning they can be used to understand the underlying dimensions of CSR initiatives in the apparel industry related to women's empowerment.

The factor analysis extracted six key factors that together explained 61.6% of the total variance. These factors represent different dimensions of CSR initiatives related to women's empowerment in the apparel industry:

1. **Workplace Diversity and Inclusion:** This factor includes variables related to gender equality in employment practices, representation in leadership roles, and diversity in decision-making processes. The high variance explained by this factor suggests that diversity and inclusion are critical components of CSR initiatives.
2. **Education and Skill Development:** This factor focuses on CSR activities that address the educational and professional development needs of women in the apparel industry. Respondents generally agreed that CSR initiatives in this area contribute positively, but there is variability in how well these initiatives are implemented.
3. **Workplace Harassment and Discrimination:** The analysis highlighted workplace safety as a distinct factor, with respondents expressing concerns about how well the industry addresses issues of harassment and discrimination. This finding underscores the need for more robust CSR policies to address these issues.
4. **Health and Wellbeing:** CSR initiatives related to women's health and wellbeing formed another significant factor. While respondents acknowledged the efforts made in this area, the data suggested that more comprehensive

programs are needed to address women's unique health challenges in the workplace.

5. **Economic and Financial Empowerment:** This factor relates to CSR programs that contribute to women's economic empowerment, such as providing equal pay and opportunities for financial growth. The relatively low variance explained by this factor suggests that the economic aspect of CSR initiatives may be less developed compared to other areas.
6. **Transparency and Reporting:** The final factor includes variables related to the transparency of CSR initiatives, particularly in terms of reporting the impact of these programs on women's empowerment. The data suggests that there is a need for more clear and specific reporting on the outcomes of CSR activities.

4.2.3 Regression Analysis

Table 7 : Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.768 ³	.590	.581	.64144

a. Predictors : (Constant), Impact, SWE, SWR, CSWE, Extent, Nature

Model Summary From here, one can perceive a very strong positive correlation- $R=0.768$ -between CSR Initiatives and their Effectiveness regarding empowering women in the apparel industry. And the R^2 value is 0.590, which means that the explained variation in effectiveness by the model is 59%, and it infers that main factors like the extent and impacts of CSR activities strongly influence the outcomes. The adjusted R^2 is 0.581, accounting for the predictors involved, which indicates the strength of the model. The model standard error of 0.64144 suggests that there is

considerable variation, hence great scope for improvement in explaining factors not covered by the model. Overall, the regression analysis points at CSR as an important factor in promoting women's empowerment in a systematic way.

Table 8 : ANNOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	173.231	6	28.872	70.172	.000
	Residual	120.553	293	.411		
	Total	293.783	299			

a. Dependent Variable : Effectiveness

b. Predictors : (Constant), Impact, SWE, SWR, CSWE, Extent, Nature

The ANOVA table shows that the model is statistically significant with an F-value of 70.172 and a p-value of 0.000. This indicates that the model as a whole is a good fit for the data and that at least one of the predictors significantly contributes to explaining the variance in the effectiveness of CSR policies and regulations.

Table 9 : Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.199	.205		.968	.334
	SWE	.100	.053	.079	1.910	.057
	SWR	-.033	.061	-.028	-.533	.594
	CSWE	.199	.065	.176	3.079	.002
	Nature	-.115	.079	-.097	-1.466	.144
	Extent	.471	.066	.440	7.189	.000

	Impact	.358	.057	.344	6.333	.000
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a. Dependent Variable : Effectiveness

The coefficients table provides the unstandardized and standardized coefficients for each predictor variable. The constant (intercept) has an unstandardized coefficient of 0.199 with a p-value of 0.334, meaning it is not statistically significant.

SWE (Status of Women's Employment) has an unstandardized coefficient of 0.100 and a p-value of 0.057. While its p-value is slightly above the conventional significance level of 0.05, it suggests a positive but marginally significant relationship with effectiveness.

SWR (Status of Women's Representation) has an unstandardized coefficient of -0.033 and a p-value of 0.594, indicating that it does not have a statistically significant effect on effectiveness.

CSWE (Current Status of Women's Empowerment) has an unstandardized coefficient of 0.199 and a p-value of 0.002, indicating a positive and statistically significant relationship with effectiveness.

Nature has an unstandardized coefficient of -0.115 and a p-value of 0.144, suggesting a negative but not statistically significant effect on effectiveness.

Extent has an unstandardized coefficient of 0.471 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a strong positive and statistically significant relationship with effectiveness.

Impact has an unstandardized coefficient of 0.358 and a p-value of 0.000, also indicating a strong positive and statistically significant relationship with effectiveness.

The model summary revealed an R^2 value of 0.590, indicating that approximately 59% of the variance in the effectiveness of CSR policies could be explained by the

variables included in the model. The regression analysis identified several key predictors of CSR effectiveness:

- **Extent of CSR Initiatives:** The extent to which CSR initiatives are implemented emerged as the most significant predictor, with a standardized coefficient of 0.471 ($p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that the more comprehensive and widespread the CSR activities, the greater their impact on women's empowerment.
- **Impact of CSR Initiatives:** The perceived impact of CSR activities on women's professional and personal development was another strong predictor, with a standardized coefficient of 0.358 ($p < 0.001$). This highlights the importance of CSR programs that are tailored to meet the specific needs of women in the apparel industry.
- **Current Status of Women's Empowerment:** This variable also had a positive and significant relationship with CSR effectiveness (standardized coefficient = 0.199, $p = 0.002$), suggesting that companies with a strong focus on women's empowerment are more likely to have successful CSR programs.

4.3 Findings Regarding Each Hypothesis and Objective

4.3.1 Current Status of Women's Employment Representation and Empowerment

The current status of women's employment and empowerment in the Indian apparel industry was mapped through the analysis, which reflected that a moderate advancement towards gender equality has taken place, though there were still certain challenges regarding leaders' representation and career advancements. Descriptive

statistics from the responses indicated a majority of agreeing responses on employment practices promoting gender equality; however, regional variations were apparent. The data could not support H1: the hypothesis that the regions have equal employment and empowerment rates for women. Some of these regions were found to enact more liberal policies in employment and representation of women in top positions than others. For example, regions which were more economically developed and had better infrastructure showed an increased number of women leaders and more opportunities for career advancement. This might point out that the geographical context is an important dimension shaping female employment.

Whereas the less developed regions industries were presenting a smaller women empowerment level and thus for the region-specific strategy. The result also points out that although there are quite enough numbers of women present at the entry-level positions, their senior management is relatively low in number. This therefore agrees with the tested alternative hypothesis, H1A: there are regional differences in women's empowerment. Targeted regional interventions such as leadership development programs and mentorship initiatives should, therefore, be instrumental in closing the gaps between men and women in the workplace. Such interventions will create conditions to support the growth of women professionally.

4.3.2 Nature and Extent of CSR Initiatives Aimed at Women's Empowerment

For instance, the nature and magnitude of CSR activities regarding women's empowerment within the garment industry significantly differ among regions or sectors. The results refute the initial hypothesis that CSR activities across all industries are the same. Conversely, this postulated alternative hypothesis - H2A- is

accepted since considerable variations were found to occur in the level and scale of CSR activities. Indeed, industries highly export-oriented or closely linked to MNCs have more comprehensive CSR programs on women's empowerment, including training programs, leadership development, and gender equality policies in the workplace. Companies that are primarily oriented toward domestic concerns and that operate in smaller markets are less likely to have such extensive CSR commitments; when present at all, such initiatives are generally narrower in scope and scale.

From the results of factor analysis, the critical dimensions of CSR activities include education and skill development, avoidance of harassment in the workplace, and economic empowerment. Firms with good CSR policies tend to put a strong emphasis on education and training as part of their poor empowerment strategy, commitment to sustainability, and long-term growth. The levels of engagement with CSR activities were also found to be higher in some regions, where local governments and NGOs have been actively involved in the promotion of corporate responsibility. The results confirm that while all CSR initiatives are important for women's empowerment, their impacts largely depend on company commitment, resources, and regional context. More standardized benchmarks within CSR practices could potentially make the approach to women's empowerment across the board consistent.

4.3.3 Framework for Measuring the Impact of CSR Activities on Women's Empowerment

The framework to measure the impact of CSR activities on women's empowerment shows considerable differences in the effectiveness of the measurement models. Since

there is no significant difference in the effectiveness of the different measurement frameworks, data should not support the null hypothesis in H3. The alternative is then verified since the analysis of the regression revealed that some of the frameworks capture the actual effect of CSR activities towards women's empowerment more than others. CSR frameworks that incorporate qualitative measures like employee satisfaction, work culture, and empowerment through decision-making roles provided a more comprehensive insight into CSR's impact than those relying on quantitative indicators like the number of ladies holding leadership positions.

The analysis showed that CSR programs on skill development and education had more measurable and sustainable impacts on women's empowerment. Companies operating under such frameworks began to show remarkable improvements in retaining labor, offering leadership opportunities for women, and job satisfaction. However, because industries and regions did not have uniformity in measurement approaches, assessing the aggregate impact of CSR activities is cumbersome. A more holistic framework incorporating qualitative and quantitative metrics would afford greater accuracy in assessing CSR effectiveness, hence allowing companies to garner a clear view of where best their resources can be allocated for increased impact regarding women's empowerment.

4.3.4 Effectiveness of Existing CSR Policies and Regulations

CSR policies and regulations regarding women's empowerment are not effective in existing companies in the Indian apparel industry. The hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the outcome of women's empowerment between the

companies which have executed CSR policies and those which have not, was rejected (H4). Results showed, instead, that the alternative hypothesis-that companies actually implementing CSR policies attained significantly better performances in women's empowerment than those which did not-was valid. Specifically, it emerged from the analysis that companies with formal policies on CSR, especially those concerning gender equality and inclusion, ensure greater women's participation in the leadership ranks, access to professional development opportunities, and a positive workplace culture.

Companies not having emphasis on the CSR activities reflected poorer results regarding gender diversity and employee satisfaction. The appearance of policy implementation rather than just the existence of such policies was strongly emphasized in the regression analysis as a critical ingredient for the effectiveness of those policies. Therefore, the significant improvements in empowering women were determined by how deep the CSR policies had been inculcated into the core of business strategies through the setting of clear targets and regular reporting. These findings suggest that CSR policies are important to foster gender equality, but how far they have penetrated into the companies' culture determines their effectiveness. This will also involve strengthening the CSR reporting mechanisms and accountability for enhancing the overall impact of these initiatives.

4.4 Summary

Further analysis of the CSR initiatives that have so far been taken, along with the impacts on women's empowerment in the Indian apparel industry, would therefore be

highly useful in providing valuable insights into the effectiveness of such initiatives (Das, 2021). The research showed that though significant progress had been made, there were substantial challenges to achieve gender equality-especially regarding the representation of women in leadership, or in career growth for women. These findings confirm that there are indeed regional disparities in the representation and empowerment of women, with more economically developed regions having a better record. These variations emphasize the need for region-specific interventions related to leadership development programs as a necessary step toward closing the gender gap in underdeveloped areas. The nature and extent of CSR initiatives also differ to a great degree across the industry (Mandal, 2013).

Hence, companies that are more oriented with multinationals or engaged in export-oriented activities have wider CSR engagements on women's empowerment, particularly through education and capacity building. Meanwhile, for companies operating on a national scale, their CSR engagements are limited, which affects the trend of women's empowerment in general. This shows that more standardized measures and frameworks should be pursued in order to ensure that CSR practices are consistently implemented across industries (McCarthy, 2017).

Moreover, it was also identified that qualitative and quantitative metrics included in the frameworks provide more accurate measures of the impacts of CSR activities on women's empowerment. Firms adopting such holistic frameworks improve employee satisfaction and leadership opportunities for women (McCarthy, 2017). The success with CSR policies is closely related to the implementation of those policies, and companies that have strong CSR practices witnessed significant improvements in women's participation in leadership and professional development (Gupta, 2021). In

other words, CSR initiatives for promoting women's empowerment in the apparel industry are important but will fall along a gradient of regional contexts, company commitments, and the comprehensiveness of the CSR framework in terms of effectiveness. Accountability and uniform means of yielding to CSR practices within the sector probably will increase effectiveness (Hellström, 2020).

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The Indian apparel industry is one of the strongest pillars of the Indian economy, the industry surely has a huge scope to change society, especially for women. Since many women are employed within this sector, CSR strategies have become the key interventions to sensitize and eradicate gender inequities and improve women's skill development and socioeconomic status (Dixit and Lal, 2019). CSR initiatives in the apparel sector are usually targeted at offering vocational training, financial sustenance, workplace enhancement, and employment to women assuring them of the position of power. This chapter builds on the effect of CSR on women's employment status in the Indian apparel sector to ascertain the level of correspondence between CSR activities and increasing women's employability alongside the overall goals of female emancipation and sustainable development (Justin, 2018). Based on the literature review and case studies, the analysis focuses on how education, health, and capacity building contribute to improving the quality of life of women workers and their families. In addition, the paper examines obstacles to such programs and citizens' responsibilities for improving their function. Therefore, the 'insights' are intended to enhance the knowledge base on CSR's ability to bring about change and provide the basis for practical recommendations.

5.2 Summary of the study and findings

Discussion on Descriptive statistics

The employment practices in the Indian apparel industry promote gender equality with a mean value of 3.33 and std deviation of 1.24 depicting a moderate level of agreement among the respondents. Compared with the literature review, it has been evaluated that the reduced framework amplifies and values women's voices, aspects, and experiences in decision-making processes and policy discussions. It is important to reorganize and address the diversity of women's identities, experiences and needs across different contexts and intersections of social factors. It is observed that celebrating women's achievement, creativity, leadership, and contributions to society in different fields. Fostering solidarity and support among women and allies, building networks and movements for gender equality and women's rights (Murmura and Bravi, 2020).

In the apparel industry, women have equal opportunities for career growth compared to male employees reflecting a general perception of moderate equality in career advancement. Comparing the literature, it has been determined that women's empowerment in the apparel industry is a multifaceted issue that encompasses different aspects including gender equality, economic opportunities, social justice, and labor rights. Women receive fair wages and benefits for their work, involving equal pay for equal work and access to benefits including maternity leave and healthcare. Women's empowerment initiatives are important due to the significant participation of women in the workforce, mainly in garment manufacturing. Ensuring equal employment opportunities for women at all levels of the industry from factory workers to managerial positions through fair recruitment and promotion practices (Brooksworth et al., 2021).

Women's representation in leadership positions scored a mean of 3.44 (SD=1.23), depicting that although women are present in leadership roles may still be underrepresented. It has been determined that carrying out empowerment workshops and training sessions emphasizing leadership development, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship skills enhances women workers to take on roles of leadership, start their businesses, and make informed financial decisions. Providing access to healthcare services and promoting overall well-being among women workers is important (Vijayarasa and Liu, 2022).

The effectiveness of CSR initiatives aimed at women's empowerment. The mean score for the statement CSR activities contribute to creating a supportive and inclusive work environment for women was 3.34 depicting that CSR initiatives are perceived to have a positive, though moderate, influence on workplace inclusivity. It has been evaluated that in the apparel industry CSR initiatives targeting women have a significant impact on gender equality, empowering women, and enhancing working conditions. Executing gender practices and policies within apparel companies, involving equal pay for equal work, flexible working arrangements, zero-tolerance policies, and parental leave policies for gender-based discrimination and harassment. Investing in community development projects in garment-producing regions that benefit women and their families, involving education programs, healthcare services, childcare facilities, and development of infrastructure. Implementation of CSR initiatives, apparel companies can contribute to advancing women's empowerment, and enhancing equitable and inclusive industry for women workers (Dey et al., 2023).

Discussion on Factor analysis

The dimensions of CSR activities directed toward women's empowerment a factor analysis was carried out. This approach helps in the reduction of the complexity of the data by summarizing it into key factors that explain the variance in respondents' perceptions. In the communities table, it is possible to form an idea related to how much each variable accounted for factors derived through the analysis. It provides insight into the critical thematic areas on which women's empowerment can rely with confidence to ensure CSR effectiveness. High commonality for breaking workforce barriers, underlying their prime relevance to drive effective initiatives. CSR initiatives in women's empowerment encompass a range of efforts aimed at promoting gender equality, enhancing opportunities, and advancing women's rights for social and economic advancement. It is observed that providing scholarships, educational programs, and vocational training opportunities for girls and women, mainly in underserved communities, gives them access to quality education and develops relevant skills (Rajesh, 2020).

Variables including skill development and standardized benchmarking as high as 0.729 and 0.721 respectively underlining the need for consistent training programs and their evaluation frameworks. Gender equality practices at 0.709 and representation of leadership at 0.690 depicts inclusive growth of the profession.

Compared with the literature review, it has been determined that policies for women's empowerment are important for the promotion of gender equality and ensuring that women have equal rights, opportunities, and access to resources. Enforce and enact laws that promote gender equality and protect women's rights in areas including education, employment, inheritance, property ownership, and discrimination. Legal reforms can address discriminatory practices and provide a framework for addressing

gender-based disparities. Executing policies to promote girls' education and eliminate barriers to schooling such as gender-based violence, lack of access to schools, and child marriage. Investing in initiatives that provide equality education and skills training for women and girls, involving vocational training, STEM education, and adult literacy programs (Walters, 2022).

The initial eigenvalues indicated the amount of variance in the original variables accounted for by each component. The first component discussed 34.590% of the variance, and the second one explained 8.032%. The variance discussed by each factor is redistributed to achieve a more interpretable structure. Workplace diversity and inclusion is a factor that includes variables related to gender equality in employment practices, representation in leadership roles, and diversity in decision-making processes. Compared with the literature review, it has been evaluated that corporate commitment is important for enhancing inclusive workplaces, promoting diversity, and driving sustainable business practices. Companies develop and execute policies and practices that promote gender equality throughout the organization. This involves policies related to recruitment, hiring, pay equity, promotion, and preventing harassment. Companies establish diversity and inclusion committees or task forces to oversee the execution of these policies and monitor progress. Transparent salary structures and performance evaluation processes can support accountability and fairness (Patil and Ramgouda, 2021).

Companies execute inclusion and diversity initiatives to create a supportive and inclusive work environment for employees of all genders. This may involve unconscious bias training, diversity recruitment programs, mentorship, sponsorship opportunities for women, affinity groups or employee resource groups (ERGs), and

flexible work arrangements to accommodate diverse needs (Szegedi et al., 2021).

Companies strive to enhance the representation of women in leadership positions, involving the board of directors, executive team, and senior management. Companies promote gender equality in their supply chains by sourcing products and services from women-owned businesses and suppliers that prioritize gender diversity and inclusion. Supplier diversity programs involve building capacity, and procurement opportunities for women-owned enterprises to support their sustainability and growth.

Furthermore, education and skill development as other factors emphasize CSR activities that address the educational and professional development needs of women in the apparel industry. It is determined that the feminist theory focuses on the importance of women's participation and representation in decision-making processes at different levels in society involving politics, civil society, and governance (Tewari et al., 2021). This also addresses violence as a significant barrier to empowering women and calls for comprehensive strategies to prevent violence, support survivors and hold perpetrators accountable. This theory also supports recognizing the interconnectedness of women's struggles across national, cultural, and geographic contexts and advocates for global solidarity and activism to advance women's empowerment and rights. This also highlighted the gender disparities within the apparel industry, mainly in terms of rights of labor and working conditions.

Transparency and reporting are also considered a factor linked with CSR initiatives, mainly in terms of reporting the influence of these programs on empowering women. The literature stated that promoting transparency and accountability within the apparel supply chain to ensure that women workers are not exploited and that their rights are protected involving regular audits, supplier training programs, and grievance

mechanisms (Ahmed, 2021). It is determined that investing in the project of community development in garment-producing regions benefits women and their families, involving healthcare services, education programs, and childcare facilities. It is observed that promoting financial inclusion for women workers through initiatives such as access to banking services, credit programs, and financial literacy training helps them build financial resilience and independence. Through these CSR measures, apparel companies may positively impact the progression of women's rights in the workplace concerning supporting, and enhancing the working conditions and environment of women employees in the global clothing industry (Dey et al., 2023).

Discussion on Regression analysis

The extent to which CSR initiatives are implemented emerged as the most significant predictor, with a standardized coefficient of 0.471 ($p < 0.001$). CSR initiatives targeting women in the apparel industry can have a significant effect on promoting gender equality, empowering women, and enhancing working conditions. Executing well-being initiatives and health that emphasize women's specific needs, involving reproductive health services, access to maternal healthcare, and mental health support. Organizing workshops and training sessions that emphasize building confidence among women, leadership skills, and developing abilities in decision-making (Kumar and Shobana, 2023).

The influence of CSR activities on women's professional and personal development was another strong predictor with a standardized coefficient of 0.358. CSR initiatives in women's empowerment encompass a range of efforts aimed at promoting gender equality, advancing women's rights, and enhancing opportunities for women's economic and social advancement. In the fashion industry, CSR initiatives

emphasizing women's empowerment are important for promoting gender equality, enhancing working conditions, and inclusive practices. Incorporating gender perspectives into sustainability initiatives within the fashion industry involves promoting ethical production practices, reducing the environmental impact, and empowering women as agents of change in creating a more sustainable fashion industry. Collaborating with NGOs, government agencies, and other stakeholders to leverage resources, scale-up initiatives, and share best practices aimed at promoting women's empowerment in the fashion sector (Nazrul and Rahman, 2021).

Women's empowerment is also linked with CSR effectiveness, depicting that companies with a strong focus on women's empowerment are more likely to have successful CSR programs. Comparing with the literature review it has been determined that women have equal access to employment opportunities within the industry, involving positions in leadership and roles mainly dominated by men. Creation of safe and supportive working environments free from harassment, discrimination, and unsafe working conditions. Promoting transparency within the apparel supply chain to ensure that women are not exploited at any stage of the production process, from garment factories to cotton fields. It is observed that women's empowerment initiatives are important due to the significant participation of women in the workforce, especially in manufacturing garments.

The scrutiny of women's employment and women's economic empowerment in the apparel industry in India found moderate improvement toward gender parity but a distant indication of geographical variation. It is determined that technologically/economically developed areas with relatively better infrastructural facilities had a higher representation of women in leadership and career mobility as

compared to developing regions. There is still a poor representation of females in the top-level management positions. The hypothesis of the equality of employment rates in different regions (H1) was rejected, proving regional disparities, (H1A). To deal with these aspects, leadership development, and mentorship programs are advised to ensure that women advance professionally as well as are promoted to higher positions. Compared with the literature, it has been evaluated that women's empowerment is important in the Indian apparel industry due to the high employment ratios of women especially in the Apparel Manufacturing industry. Here are the following particular measures and programs that are focused on women's advancement in the Indian apparel sector. The programs being initiated for the women such as literacy and education projects as well as the skill development and vocational training in areas like garment manufacturing, quality control, and management training. Safeguarding all kinds of workplaces, that is, we have to free them from any form of harassment, discrimination, and other unhealthy conditions and to provide the women employees with reasonable facilities such as the cleanliness of toilets for women, baby care centers, and transport facilities for women at workplace (Brooksworth et al., 2021).

The cross-sectional analysis of the Global CSR index on women's empowerment finds that CSR activities vary greatly region and sector-wise; thus, the author disproves the traditional business hypothesis that CSR treatment is industry-standardized.

Maximum firms, such as export-oriented and MNC-associated firms, initiate extensive programs including training, leadership development, and gender policies compared to minimum programs started by domestic-oriented firms focused only on small-scale programs. Factor analysis identifies key CSR dimensions: in education

and training, policies against workplace harassment, and gender mainstreaming economic programs. Later is illustrated where higher engagement level is experienced in areas with the active participation of government and NGOs. They stress the importance of the development of best practice benchmarks regarding CSR to maintain similar and effective WM practices around the world. The literature stated that CSR initiatives are related to targeting women in the apparel segment affecting gender equality, empowering women, and enhancing conditions of working. Training sessions, and organizing workshops help in focusing on building confidence among women and decision-making abilities within the industry (Kumar and Shobana, 2023).

5.3 Conclusion

The study's first objective is to analyze the current status of women's empowerment, representation, and empowerment in the industry. It is identified that companies investing in initiatives for the creation of safe and supportive work environments for women, involve executing anti-harassment policies, providing personal protective equipment, and setting grievance redressal mechanisms to ensure their safety. Encouraging women's representation in decision-making bodies within the company and supporting initiatives that promote gender diversity in leadership positions can enhance a more inclusive workplace culture. Additionally, in the fashion industry women's empowerment is an ongoing movement aimed at promoting gender equality, inclusivity, and diversity within the segment. The promotion of diverse representations of women in fashion advertising, runways, and media is important to deal with challenging traditional beauty standards and promoting inclusivity. Providing education and development of skills opportunities for women interested in

pursuing careers in fashion, involving design, and merchandising support empowers them to achieve their professional goals and contribute meaningfully to the industry. Moreover, the second objective is to examine the nature and extent of CSR initiatives aimed at women's empowerment. It is identified that in the apparel industry CSR initiatives targeting women have a significant influence on the promotion of gender equality, empowering women, and enhancing working conditions. Executing health and well-being initiatives that emphasize women's specific needs, involving reproductive health services, access to maternal healthcare, nutrition programs, and support towards mental health. Organizing training sessions and workshops emphasizes building women's confidence, skills of leadership, and decision-making abilities, empowering them to take on leadership roles within the industry. CSR initiatives in women's empowerment encompass a range of efforts aimed at promoting gender equality, advancing women's rights, and enhancing opportunities for women's economic and social advancement.

Promoting women's rights through embracing digital tech, e.g., literacy programs, especially in regions where most women can only access mobile banking services but are barred from joining the network. Main understandings: Main understandings on what Gender-mainstreaming is; how it can be incorporated in environmental sustainability interventions; and why women's involvement in natural resource conservation and management, climate change response, and exploitation of renewable resources is very important. Service delivery partnerships where partners combine resources, knowledge, and expertise to support increased delivery of services and policies towards empowering women and enhancing gender equity. Such CSR

investments contribute significantly to achieving women's rights, promoting equality, and poverty reduction as well as delivering sustainable development goals.

The third objective is to develop a framework for measuring the impact of CSR activities on women's empowerment. It is determined CSR initiatives in women's empowerment provide efforts aimed at the promotion of gender equality, advancing women's rights, and enhancing opportunities for women's social and economic advancement. It is observed that providing educational programs, scholarships, and vocational training opportunities for girls and women, mainly in underserved communities to enhance their access to educational quality and develop relevant skills for employment. In the workplace, executing policies and practices to promote gender diversity and inclusion which also include opportunities for equal employment, flexible working arrangements, parental leave policies, and leadership development programs. The promotion of women's empowerment throughout the supply chain by ensuring fair wages, safe working conditions, and opportunities for advancement for women workers in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors. Leveraging technology and innovation to address gender disparities and empower women, involving digital literacy programs, initiatives to bridge the digital gender divide, and access to mobile banking services. CSR initiatives play an important role in advancing women's empowerment and gender equality. By aligning business interests with social impact goals, companies can make meaningful contributions to women's rights and gender equality. Through collaboration with local organizations, fashion companies can raise the efficacy of their efforts and better meet the multifaceted social and economic needs of women in the industry. In sum, the works concerned with gender equality

and women's rights of fashion companies are vital to improving the CSR profiles of both the global and local supply chains for women's fashion.

Lastly, the fourth objective is to evaluate the effectiveness of existing CSR policies and regulations in promoting women's empowerment in the apparel industry. It is determined that women's empowerment policies are important for gender equality and also ensure women have equal rights, opportunities, and access to resources.

Integrate a gender perspective into all policies, programs, and projects across government departments and agencies. Gender mainstreaming includes analyzing the differential influence of policies on women and men taking proactive measures to deal with gender equality and promoting gender equality in all areas of decision-making and governance. Ensuring access to legal aid services and mechanisms for women who face discrimination, violence, or other forms of injustice. Providing support for women's rights organizations, legal clinics, and helplines to assist women in accessing justice and seeking redress for violations of their rights. Development of policies to promote gender-sensitive media and communication that challenge stereotypes, promote positive portrayals of women, and raise awareness about gender issues. Strengthening data collection systems and monitoring mechanisms to track progress on women's empowerment indicators and assess the influence of programs and policies.

Women-empowered organizations, women and girls' advocacy groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and community-based organizations (CBOs) have significant roles in the facilitation of women empowerment. These organizations offer primary services including healthcare, education, legal, income-generating opportunities, and political engagement and urge change, increase knowledge, and

rally people on behalf of women and for women. For women's empowerment interventions worldwide, funding is received from international organizations including the United Nations (UN) and World Bank, other regional organizations, and bilateral and multilateral donor agencies.

5.4 Implications

The research on women's empowerment in the Indian apparel industry through CSR activities aligns with theories of stakeholder engagement and feminist theory. The alignment of stakeholder theory focuses on the responsibility of organizations to address the stakeholder interest, not just stakeholders. Female employees are one of the most important constituencies of workers in the Indian apparel sector who experience problems including low wages, poor promotion opportunities, and dissatisfactory treatment. Development programs, policies, and causes that address women's issues in organizations, including skill development, gender-sensitive workplace policies, and health and education will help in reducing the gap between Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Economic Value hence promoting equity. When businesses promote women, then they display moral management, which also will over make up and mend the relationships with the shareholders and expand the defensible competitive benefit by raising the morale and value of the workers.

Feminist Theory does not conform to structural discords but focuses on changing the conventional gender roles. In addition, CSR efforts should complement feminist frameworks to eradicate the internal problems females encounter in the apparel business in their totality rather than superficial support. Thus, leadership positions for women, combating gender discrimination, and equal pay for equal work fall squarely

within the ornate of feminism. Sequential integration of these theories, and CSR initiatives targeted in the apparel industry are helpful for the women employees and for qualifying the objectives of women's emancipation. Organizations embracing this dual theoretical perspective contain their business plans with global movements such as NGO United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 5 on Gender Equality.

Therefore, the study makes a significant contribution by integrating Stakeholder Theory and Feminist Theory that supports enhancing social justice and stakeholder equity as business values for engendering change in the Indian apparel sector.

On the other hand, the practical implication is that CSR involvement in improving the status of women in the Indian apparel industry has many impacts on the companies and society. With more and more organizations implementing CSR ideologies, workforce development of women can be boosted in the sector by offering them closely related skills developing programs connected with the apparel sector. This not only increases efficiency and productivity but also contributes to women's economic empowerment and enhanced local economies. It is observed that there are many EU states that call for gender approaches in the organization where female employee requirements, childcare, working hours, and safe workplace problems are solved. They also serve as a way to decrease gender disparity and increase diversity and overall company image, which is important for today's conscious consumers and investors.

Furthermore, specific CSR interventions in education, health, and women's employment and entrepreneurship in rural regions enable long-term sustainable livelihoods and supply chain programs. Such efforts can be supported by NGOs and government programs to reach many people. On a broader scale, these initiatives

position the apparel industry as a leader in driving social change, aligning with global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5: Gender Equality). Thereby, economic and social benefits stemming from women's employment include a better brand image, effective community relations, and lasting competitive advantages.

5.5 Future Research

Future research studies may justify examining the effectiveness of CSR activities on Women's Empowerment in the Indian Apparel Industry from the perspective of analyzing the CSR programs' sustainable effects on women's social, economic, career managerial, and entrepreneurial opportunities. CSR-related research can be carried out to analyze whether the implemented CSR programs have a significant impact on the ability of women to be financially independent and gain vocational skills and leadership skills, especially from the rural to the urban areas and vice versa. Further, studies can also be conducted on the comparisons of the country-specific empirical results or comparisons of the different sub-sectors in the apparel industry to learn more about the gaps and the optimum strategies to facilitate Women's Empowerment. Considering by which and how exactly those technologies and digital tools used in technology-driven CSR activities contribute to filling these gaps of skills and/or integration of employees and different stakeholders can also be another important area of investigation.

Besides, future research could examine customers' attitudes focusing on the impact of CSR initiatives on women, and how the latter affects the choice of brands. Using growth and change data and feedback from key players, researchers can formulate recommendations on how micro, small, and medium enterprises in the apparel

industry can build empowering models of sustainability over the long term about gender mainstreaming.

5.6 Summary

It is analyzed that the role of CSR initiatives in improving women's empowerment is crucial and addressing gender inequalities in the Indian apparel sector. It is determined that some of the important findings are: sexual equality is only moderately improving; However, regional variations and inadequacy of female managers and executives are emerging issues. This paper concludes that the incorporation of CSR strategies for example skill training, remuneration policy, diversity, and community engagement improves women's career advancement and personal lives although there is room for advancement.

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